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Understanding the Significant Symbols of
Lebanese-Canadian Maronite Wedding Ceremonies

By

Paul Gebrael

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research through Sociology
and Anthropology in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of
Arts at the University of Windsor

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Abstract

Examination of the perceptions and opinions towards the significant symbols in the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding ceremony was examined from the perspective of three pre-defined groups': first-generation-Lebanese who have lived in Canada for more than 10 years, second-generation-Lebanese, those whose parents are both first generation Lebanese and first-generation recent arrivals to Canada who have been in the country less than 5 years. Symbolic Interactionism and Denzin's Interpretive Interactionism were employed as the theoretical and methodological considerations, respectively.

Overall, thirty respondents from the Lebanese community were interviewed using an unstructured interview schedule. First, ten first generation Lebanese-Canadians, between the ages of 45-70 were interviewed. Secondly, ten second-generation Lebanese-Canadians were interviewed, between the ages of 20-56. Finally, ten first-generation recent arrivals to Canada were interviewed, between the ages of 20-40.

The main research question addressed the significant symbols involved in constructing the situation that is the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding. Other questions created around the Lebanese respondents were who would deviate from these symbols and would second-generation respondent's accept-reject or modify the use of these symbols, as per Blumer's (1969) third premise.

Overall, the results indicated that the significant symbols have a shared meaning by both first-generation groups, those who have lived in Canada for more than ten years and those who have recently arrived. Second-generation respondents seemed to have a general and vague understandings of the significant symbols discussed in this thesis and were the one's who were more likely to define the wedding-ceremony and the symbols involved in a different light.

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Youssef and Rose Gebrael and my siblings, Jack, Nicole and Anthony, who were all supportive, encouraging and proud throughout the whole process of writing this thesis. I would also like to dedicate this piece to the vibrant Lebanese community across Windsor-Essex County.

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Over the past six years that I have been associated with the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, I have made some amazing ties and would like to acknowledge them at this point.

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Besides my committee members, the entire department of Sociology and Anthropology were extremely supportive throughout the past two years. To those professors who employed me as their Research Assistant, Drs Nakhaie (on more than one occasion), Deukmedjian, Omorodion, George and De Lint, thank you. Your financial support was greatly appreciated. For those professors whose Graduate classes I took, Drs Lippert, O’Connor and Maticka-Tyndale, thank you for making your classes interesting and challenging me to be a better student.

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“The researcher with a sociological imagination uses his or her own life experiences as topics of inquiry” (Denzin, 2001:70)

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction: A Profile of the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite Community

This study aims to assist in the understanding of significant symbols and situations that are shared in the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite community particularly in relation to wedding ceremonies. Therefore, it is only appropriate to begin with a short overview of the profile of this community. The Lebanese Maronite community is a relatively recent addition to the North American ethnic mosaic. Over the past fifty to sixty years, there has been an influx of Lebanese Maronites migrating to North America. However, Lebanese Maronite migration began in the late 1800s, with immigrants settling in familiar towns and cities to their hometown in their country of origin, in addition to towns that were occupied by friends and family members who arrived before them (Aboud, 2002; Abu-Laban, 1992; Ahdab-Yehia, 1974 Jabbra & Jabbra, 1984 & 1987). Cities like Detroit, Michigan, Windsor, Ontario, Halifax, Nova Scotia and Leamington, Ontario amid others began forming ethnic pockets occupied by Lebanese families of similar religious and cultural origins and who derived from similar cities or towns in Lebanon (Aboud, 2002; Abu-Laban, 1992; Ahdab-Yehia, 1974 Jabbra & Jabbra, 1984 & 1987).

The majority of Lebanese Maronites who migrated to North America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries did so as a result of the rule of the Ottoman Empire. There was a slight decline in immigration to North America in the earlier parts of the 19th century, picking up before, during and after the Lebanese Civil War in order to pursue a more promising future for their families (Abu-Laban, 1992; Ahdab-Yehia, 1974; Jabbra & Jabbra, 1984 & 1987). Many residents from Northern Lebanese villages and towns,

namely Zgharta, Ehden, Hasroun, Hadchit, Becharri, Serhel and Tourza, took part in this chain migration to pursue a life in a new country. Coming to Canada would not be an easy task, however. Moving to a new country leads to learning a new way of existence, a new language and a new perspective on life. Chain migration, which is evident in Dearborn and Leamington, alleviates some of the trials and tribulations one faces when first entering a new country. By surrounding oneself with people who share similar beliefs and values, one can re-establish an ethnic identity in a foreign land. According to Baron and colleagues (2001: 144), ethnic identity is, "the part of someone's social identity that is derived from membership in, or identification with a particular ethnic group."

Two examples where chain migration has occurred are in Dearborn, Michigan (where it is predominately a Muslim community) and Leamington, Ontario (a predominantly Lebanese Maronite community). According to a study done by Ajrouch (2003), the estimated population of Arab Americans was approximately 250,000 in the late 1990s and is growing at an exponential rate (Zogby, 1990). The Detroit/Dearborn area has the largest and most visible Arab American community in the United States. As in other parts of the North America, the Lebanese make up the highest percentage (43.7%) of the local Arab American population (Zogby, 1990). Similarly, we see an identical trend amongst Lebanese Maronite Catholics in Leamington, Ontario. In Leamington, we find immigrants mainly from the Northern Lebanese towns of Zgharta, Ehden, Hasroun, Hadchit, Becharri, Serhel and Tourza. As the war erupted in the mid 1970s, an abundance of Northern Lebanese residents fled the country and a number of them migrated to Leamington as a result of pioneering migrants, who established a

foundation for future migrants to arrive and settle in a familiar environment. Bearing a similarity to their towns in Northern Lebanon, Leamington was an ideal location for many hardworking Lebanese individuals from Northern Lebanon. By coming to a new village where similar cultural beliefs were practiced, one is inclined to find the village from the old country being played out in the host society; for example, maintaining one's mother tongue language, cooking cultural dishes, and practicing old superstitions and marriage patterns that resemble the practices and beliefs of the old country.

However, one challenge that has faced first-generation Lebanese Maronites is sustaining their ethnocultural identity and socializing their children under the same value system they were brought up with. Some of the competing factors that have faced Lebanese parents are the new ways of living, new cultural norms and at times a dissimilar value system than the host society. Although the language and cultural barriers may pose a potential problem for Lebanese-Canadian Maronites, it is the socializing and rearing of their children under a similar Arab value system in a host society like Canada that may become increasingly cumbersome. Some of the competing socializing agents that Lebanese Maronite families encounter include peer networks, the mass media, attending Canadian schools and working in institutions that may promote distinctively dissimilar values than those being taught at home, which may lead to the child eventually neglecting his or her ethnocultural heritage and assimilating the norms of the host society.

There are many cultural differences that can be identified between Maronite communities and that of the host society. For example, the languages Lebanese Maronites communicate with deviates substantially from the conventional and preferred English or French. Moreover, most of the cultural practices may be at odds with the host society's

norms. For example, the food eaten, the music listened to, the traditions and rituals found in certain situations like the funeral, baptism and wedding and finally the ways in which Lebanese Maronite families conduct themselves and discipline their family members may be perceived by the host society as deviating from the norm. Therefore, it becomes additionally difficult to socialize a child under the value system to which a first-generation Lebanese Maronite is accustomed. The question then becomes: Will the later generations reject the norms and expectations outlined by their families and culture? Or, will they be fully assimilated into the mainstream culture?

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the various definitions and meanings of significant symbols of the Lebanese-Canadian Maronites towards the roles, objects and significant symbols involved in constructing the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding ceremony and reception. More specifically, this study outlines, explains and assesses such symbolic situations and significant symbols as the mate selection process, the importance of virginity, the wedding ceremony at the church and the subsequent reception. This research first outlines the contemporary views of second and third generation Lebanese-Canadian Maronites on the significant symbols shared and practiced in the host society as part of a Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding. Furthermore, the importance of having a “cultural wedding” is unveiled. Secondly, first generation Lebanese participants were assessed in terms of the abovementioned symbols and situations to gain a contrasting perspective on the issues, objects, symbols and situations that were analyzed throughout this thesis.

Significance of Study

Being a second generation Lebanese-Canadian, I was in fact within two months of being a first generation Lebanese citizen. My mother immigrated to Canada while seven months pregnant with me on June 2nd, 1981. I was born on August 5th, 1981 in Leamington, Ontario, Canada. Perhaps, that is why I am so interested and immersed in my parent's culture as I was only a couple months short of claiming first generation Lebanese status. Growing up in Canada the past twenty-four years, I have experienced many ethnocultural situations like the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding and have developed a great interest in studying significant symbols in ethnic groups, their families and the ability to socialize and sustain similar symbols, objects, rituals, values and norms found in the old country and in a host society like Canada. My parents believe that they did an adequate job raising four children under the rubric with which they were brought up. However, some of us accepted those traditions and values to a greater extent than others. This will be discussed as a practice of partial free-will on the part of the social actor in a particular situation in conformity with the Chicago School of Symbolic Interactionism and its image of man.

On an academic level, I feel that this thesis will contribute significantly to the lacking literature on ethnic weddings, in addition to the study of large ethnic groups living in small towns carrying out the rituals and traditions practiced in their country of origin. Overall, I feel that this is a great opportunity to study one's native culture and to enlighten others on the issues and symbolisms that are shared by so many in a host society. Denzin (2001) said it best—"the researcher with a sociological imagination uses his or her own life experiences as topics of inquiry" (Denzin, 2001:70).

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Symbolic Interactionism

The theoretical framework that was employed for this study was Symbolic Interactionism. The reason for choosing this theory was largely due to the fact that Symbolic Interactionism can be understood and applied in a myriad of ways. Firstly, Symbolic Interactionism focuses on the significance of symbols and their shared meanings among individuals in a given society. Moreover, the major tenets or characteristics of the Symbolic Interaction perspective are an emphasis on interactions among people, the use of symbols in communication and interaction, interpretation as part of action, self as constructed by others through communication and interaction and flexible, adjustable social processes (Hewitt, 2000: 7).

Thus, human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols, by an interpretative process, or by ascertaining the meaning of one another's actions. Symbolic Interactionism is a theory which does not only explain how society and one's culture influence the individual, but also, how social interactions engender and modify society, culture and the identity of the individual (Charon, 2001; Hewitt, 2003). Thus, when undertaking a study on a particular culture using the Symbolic Interactionist framework, like the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite community, one has to outline and apply the major concepts of Symbolic Interactionism with respect to his/her study. Some of the major concepts that will be utilized in this thesis are human conduct, social objects, significant symbols, roles, role-taking and role-making and finally role-making and generalized others.

Human conduct among social actors relies heavily on the creation and maintenance of meaning. For Symbolic Interactionists, conduct is predicated on meaning

and is constructed and transformed as people define and act in situations (Hewitt, 2001; Hewitt, 2003:28). Furthermore, meaning is propelled by intention. For example, one says something with the intention of the other social actor in the situation interpreting the meaning of the gesture or what is being said in a certain context. Consequently, social actors act amid one another with a purpose or end-goal in mind. Thus, for symbolic interactionists the concepts of 'intention' and 'meaning' are needed to work in unison to create dialogue and a shared definition of the situation between the social actors. Meaning can be found in one of two ways: (1) overtly present for all to see and observe and interpret, and (2) covertly, in private where plans and purposes are concocted in private and are thus not observed by others. Conduct then becomes meaningful as a result of having purpose, in addition to meaning being purposeful because it has meaning (Hewitt, 2003:28-9). For example, growing up in a Lebanese Maronite home, I was exposed to many situations that were both meaningful and purposeful in their delivery and approach. Growing up with Lebanese parents, certain facial expressions, hand gestures and looks become meaningful to the situation. For example, if one speaks out of turn, or has too much to drink, says something offensive, fails to greet the newly arrived guests to one's home amid other behaviour that is expected of them, one should expect some sort of non-verbal gesture that is crystal clear with respect to meaning to both the recipient and dispenser of that look, or facial expression.

Definition and Significance of Symbols

The case of living in a Lebanese Maronite home, as noted previously, in addition to several other situations where certain meanings are shared, hold with them symbolic moments that can be categorized under what Symbolic Interactionists define as

significant symbols. However, before a symbol is understood and gains significant status or becomes a symbol at all, one has to familiarize themselves with more elementary concepts like an object or a sign. First, a physical object is defined as anything to which attention can be paid and toward which action can be directed (Charon, 2001: 45; Hewitt, 2003: 78). For example, a chair, desk and podium are all objects and are categorized by their use. For example, a chair is used to sit on, a desk to work from and a podium is used to conduct lectures from (Charon, 2001). However, the labelling of these objects is subject to vary based on the unconventional use of these objects. For instance, a teacher may need to use his podium for another purpose other than lecturing from, for example, resting his/her briefcase or beverage. Similarly, a chair may be used to stand on, while some students elect to sit on their desk. Consequently, physical objects are actual tangible things that we can apply labels to using language. Alternatively, as much as an object can be tangible, it is also capable of being intangible and abstract, too. For example, the notion of love is acted upon like any other objects, however, the difference is it is harder to grasp and clearly define like a desk, chair or podium.

Understanding Social Objects

Furthermore, objects can also be social. According to Hewitt, a social object is an object created by the attention and coordination it receives from a collection of individuals in a given setting. Like a physical object, previously noted, a social object is something that requires attention and action directed towards it. However, with a social object, attention and action are elaborated on. For instance, social objects require coordinated behaviour of interacting individuals paying attention to it. For example, Charon defines a social object as objects that a social actor uses in a given situation. For

Charon, social objects include many things from physical (trees, flower, rock and dirt) to human made objects (radio, fork and a piece of paper) as well as abstract objects like love, fear, sadness and other emotions (Charon, 2001:47).

Another major concept is that of a sign. A derivative of a social object, signs are social objects used to represent, stand for or take the place of whatever participants in the situation agree they shall represent (Charon, 2001:45; Hewitt, 2003). Many social objects may indicate or signify things, however, because they lack social and shared meaning the object cannot be defined as a significant symbol (Charon, 2004: 48). For example, to the host society of Canada a bowl of water and a heated piece of iron are just what they are, a bowl of water and heated piece of iron. However, for the Lebanese-Maronite community, that bowl of water and heated iron represents something symbolic. The bowl of water and heated iron are, with a few prayers or ritual sayings, mixed together to fend off the infamous and unwanted Evil Eye. For one set of social actors in the situation the objects used are objects that normally do not go with one another, while for the other group in the situation, the objects are truly symbolic or what Symbolic Interactionists would call conventional signs (Charon, 2001:45; Hewitt, 2003).

With respect to the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite community, many social objects turn symbolic with the defining of the situation. For example, a sight of a bowl of raw yeast-dough one would be inclined to believe that someone was about to make some bread. However, the symbolism, ritual and faith that are invested in that bowl of dough are paramount for those Lebanese Maronites who believe in this ritual. For everyone involved in that situation knows it is a sacred ritual and symbolic moment, as the future luck and fortune of the bride and groom is said to rest on the yeast-dough's ability to

stick on the lentil of the groom's new home. Thus, the abovementioned objects used to carry out the ritual or habits of the Lebanese culture are not only a set of social objects, but meaningful and significant symbols of the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite community. Symbols, thus, become significant as a result of having shared meaning by all the participants involved in a given situation.

Signs vs. Symbols

Within the definition of a sign, there includes within it a distinction between a natural sign and a conventional sign, otherwise known as a symbol. First, a natural sign stands for or signals the presence of important things and events. For example, the sign of smoke normally indicates a fire behind the smoke (Charon, 2001). With respect to the Lebanese Maronite wedding, the sign of decorated cars, fancy dresses, invitations all stand for a wedding. Secondly, a conventional sign, otherwise known as a symbol, is defined as something that not only stands for something else, but also represents the presence of important things and events. Thus, symbols are a class of social objects when they are defined to represent something else and according to their use and interpretation (Charon, 2001:57). For example, Charon explains that a bolt of lightening is indicative of the wrath of God, two fingers together indicate peace or victory and a handshake means a gesture of goodwill. A symbol becomes significant, according to Mead, when the symbols are meaningful for both the actor who receives them, in addition to the user of the symbol (Charon, 2001:49). Mead defines significant symbols as a set of gestures (Hewitt, 2003: 9; Charon, 2001). Further, Mead used this notion of gestures with respect to animals and how they differ from humans and the ability to exchange words rather than non-verbal gestures like growling, showing one's teeth and other "conversation of

gestures” found in the animal world (Hewitt, 2003: 31; Charon, 2001). For Mead, humans are a type of animal who possess the ability to utilize linguistics and thus are able to conduct their behaviour in a world of words (Hewitt, 2003:145). As a result of utilizing words in daily interactions to define objects, label persons roles in society and exchange and engage in verbal conversation with social actors, we are able to share meanings regarding certain symbols and, furthermore, are able to define various situations.

Symbols become important because of the shared meanings that arise from them. For Blumer (1969), symbols act as a replacement for our physical reality. Not only do symbols replace our physical reality, but they become our reality (Charon, 2001:61). For this reality to exist, meaning has to be established by social actors, and for Blumer these meanings are elicited through social interaction. Symbols become known and represent certain things as a result of interacting with other social actors. For example, growing up in the Lebanese community in Windsor, one is exposed to many cultural symbolisms that are only understood by those who are Arab, or in some cases from a certain part in the Arab world (i.e. Lebanon). Thus, through social interaction, one becomes familiar with the growing trends in a certain community. Symbols are thus defined as important by those social actors who share a distinct meaning for those social objects.

Definition of Situations and Roles

Defining a situation for Symbolic Interactionists relies on two major points. First is to locate an activity temporally in relation to another activity (Hewitt, 2003:146). What is more important, situations occur before, during or after one another and when we speak of a particular situation, we mark off a segment of time and apply a label or name to that particular situation (Hewitt, 2003:146-7; Charon, 2001). With respect to the Lebanese-

Canadian Maronite wedding, the Church ceremony is a defined situation that includes the reading of the vows, a priest blessing the bride and groom and the family of friends known as the guests. The ceremony extends over a couple of hours and is followed by another situation, the wedding reception. The wedding reception may take several additional hours to complete and becomes defined by its participants as gradually more entertaining than the wedding ceremony, including drinking, dancing, laughing, music and a larger guest list. Thus, when we define a situation as a wedding ceremony or a wedding reception we tend to associate certain acts and roles that have occurred under a certain allotment of time (Hewitt, 2003: 146-7 Charon, 2001). According to Hewitt, people locate situations temporally from the vantage point of shared ideas about the meaning of events as they occur in time (Hewitt, 2003:147). Thus, with respect to the Lebanese-Maronite community the engagement of the bride and groom comes after a set time of dating, followed by the engagement party, then the Lebanese version of the stag and doe (known as the Lail'liee), proceeded by the groom's side going to dress the bride, followed by the wedding ceremony and ending at the wedding hall where a reception is held. Overall, defining the situation requires *knowledge* and shared *meaning* of the situation. For example, in the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding, hundreds of Lebanese citizens or persons who have already been introduced to the Lebanese culture share the same knowledge and meaning of the situation that is the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding. However, others may not perceive the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding as something they define as a usual wedding. As a result, we encounter several definitions of the situation, which leads to the misidentification of self and others in relation to the definition of the situation. A prime example is that of a Lebanese-Canadian

marrying outside their ethnic group. Both sides have been socialized under two different cultures and define certain situations in different contexts. Thus, when the two groups join and attempt to define the situation in a similar manner, they quickly realize that both groups have different definitions in mind when defining the situation. Consequently, we encounter a problematic situation as a result of all parties in the situation not sharing the same knowledge and meaning of the situation.

Once the situation is defined, the use of social objects, roles and symbols help in defining the situation further through shared meaning by the social actors and participants involved in the situation (Charon, 2001:45; Hewitt, 2003). For Symbolic Interactionists, any object can garner social meaning through learning from others after engaging in interaction. Social objects are defined according to their use for people involved in a situation and we begin to understand the use of social objects by applying knowledge and meaning to that particular object (Charon, 2001:45; Hewitt, 2003).

When discussing the concept of 'role' it is important to distinguish the conventional sociological application of the term from the one that will be utilized in this thesis, the Symbolic Interactionist perception of the role. For example, the conventional sociological definition of the role includes applying distinct obligations and duties onto that particular individual in society. Conversely, Symbolic Interactionists believe in approaching a situation without any particular rules or obligations attached to the social actor in a situation (Hewitt, 2003:64-5). In contrast to applying a set of ridged rules and obligations, Symbolic Interactionists emphasize three related ideas that will be explored in greater detail—structure, configuration and the role as a resource (Hewitt, 2003:64-5). With structure, the actor is exposed to a defined situation whereby everyone in the

situation is aware of one another and can anticipate what will occur, which allows them to cognitively map or structure the situation according to roles (Hewitt, 2003:64-5). For example, when someone is invited to a Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding one knows that there will be a bride and groom, hosts/hostess, music, a bridal party and other guests. When situations are defined in a structural manner, the participants are known and defined, which allows them to act out their roles in a particular situation. The second idea in role-defining is configuration. This idea, although does not apply rules and obligations to the role, it does employ principles and general ideas in order to know how to behave in certain settings (Hewitt, 2003:64-5). For example, the host/hostess at a Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding are not accoutered with a list of duties, but rather employ a set of more general ideas about how the host is related to the guest at some level with respect to this particular situation (Hewitt, 2003:64-5). Finally, a role can be thought of as a resource that social actors employ in a situation to achieve the end-goal in a situation (Hewitt, 2003:64-5). With respect to the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding, each individual has a perception of the situation and may have knowledge about the situation and will know what will happen and why it occurs. Thus, the situation provides what Hewitt refers to as a 'container' for roles and makes it possible for social actors to bring them out and as a result the roles become not only the property of the situation, but also the property of the one utilizing that role (Hewitt, 2003:64-5).

Two concepts that help shape the conduct of actors engaging in interaction using social roles is that of role-making and role-taking. Both are needed in Symbolic Interaction as one cannot exist without the other (Hewitt, 2003:68-9). Firstly, role-making is the process wherein the person constructs activity in a situation so that it fits the

definition of the situation, is consonant with the person's own role and meshes with activity of others (Hewitt, 2003:68-9). On the other hand, role-taking (which is Mead's original term) is the process wherein the person imaginatively occupies the role of another and looks at self and situation from that vantage point in order to engage in role making (Hewitt, 2003:68-9). In other words, "Role-taking is seen in Mead's terms, as a process of putting oneself in another's place and adjusting behaviour accordingly in the course of interaction through the use of significant symbols (Stryker, 1980:107). Therefore, both processes, role-taking and role-making, employ the use of significant symbols. Growing up with Lebanese parents who try to instil a similar value system they were brought up within a host society like Canada may lead children to have conflicting selves. Attending Canadian schools, working in Canadian institutions amid other people with different nationalities, socialization and an overall different way of seeing the world than you can lead the child to role-make and role-take, respectively. Growing up in a Lebanese home, one is introduced to a strict upbringing. For example, one is not allowed to stay out past a particular time, dating and marrying within the Lebanese community is highly encouraged and practicing one's culture is also a commonality found in many Lebanese-Canadian homes. Some components of the Lebanese culture, the language of origin (Arabic), the foods and traditions we associate with are sometimes not accepted by the Anglo-Saxon community. Thus, the child either resorts to accepting the presented symbols and traditions of their parents' culture, or he/she rejects them deciding to deviate from his/her parent's culture. Unfortunately, individuals become trapped between two cultures, their own and that of the host society.

Another component in role-taking is role-taking as a generalized skill. For Symbolic Interactionists, in order for the individual to own their performance, the individual must grasp the situation and oneself from the point-of-view provided by the roles of others (Hewitt, 2003:70). This ability to empathize with other role makers and see the world through a perspective other than one's own is what Symbolic Interactionists call a 'generalized skill' (Hewitt, 2003:70). For example, the issues of virginity and mate selection in the Lebanese community are important issues that have widely held beliefs by many Lebanese citizens living in Canada. It is believed in the Lebanese Maronite community that one should maintain a sense of pureness and abstinence and remain a virgin until marriage (Barakat, 1993). Furthermore, dating outside one's culture is frowned upon by some Lebanese Maronites and they believe that one should marry a young woman or man from their own community or in-group to ensure a life like their parents, grand-parents and great-grand parents. Thus, before engaging in romantic relationships, going out to social gatherings amid other situations Lebanese-Canadians take on, not only the role of their parents, but also of the entire Lebanese Community. Thus, several thoughts may go through one's head, which may deter them from taking part in a particular situation. For example, a common statement used in the Lebanese Maronite community is, what will so-and-so think and say? (*Shou la-ee ou'lou el-ness?*) Consequently, the individual weighs all of his/her options and more often than not decides not to partake in the activities in which their reference group is participating.

Contrary to the role-taking in terms of taking the role of the parent, there is the role taking of the host-society and conforming to its norms. As a result, the individual begins to reject certain things about his or her parents' culture. Therefore, as opposed to

honouring the beliefs and values set out by the parents, the individual rejects, conforms and begins to see the world from the lens of the host society. Consequently, the importance of virginity, music, language, the food, disciplinary methods, dating restrictions, mate selection and a number of other issues may lead the individual to role take from a different source and fail to accept his or her ethnocultural heritage. An essential notion within the Symbolic Interactionist paradigm is George Herbert Mead's definition of the self. For the Symbolic Interactionist, the self is an object of the actors own action(s) (Charon, 2001: 72-3). Hence, the development and emergence of the self occurs through the process of social interaction. In my opinion, the self is not passive or reactive to the actions of others. The individual has the opportunity to analyze and assess the situation through social interaction and has the choice whether to accept, reject or modify certain stimuli during the course of social interaction, in accordance with Blumer's (1969) third premise of Symbolic Interactionism.

Herbert Blumer believes that the socialization process is not simply a reaction to one another's action, but is a process wherein individuals interpret and define actions. Herbert Blumer (1969) outlines three premises concerning the process of interaction and interpretation that will help in explaining why we have certain second and third generation individuals accepting their culture and heritage while others seek to adjust, revise or in some cases reject it. His three premises are as follow:

1. Human beings act toward things on the basis of meanings that the things have for them
2. The meaning(s) of things arises out of social interaction one has with one's fellows
3. The meanings of things are handled and modified through an interpretive process used by the person dealing with the things he or she encounters (Blumer, 1969: 2-3).

The first premise explains how individuals respond to social objects on the basis of the meanings they have attributed to them. For some second-generation Lebanese Maronites the thought of eating certain foods, communicating in a foreign language, adhering to the rules set out by the Lebanese value-system, the mate you select has to be Lebanese, cannot stay out past a specified time and not engaging in any sexual behaviour are accepted by some and practiced religiously by others in the host society. However, for others, the thought of living a life under the Lebanese structure may be construed as excessive and not conducive to mainstream values. Whether the individual believes in the Lebanese value-system or not it depends on the meaning they have accredited to it. The individual and the parent may share a similar meaning of the Lebanese system of living or they can sharply disagree. However, it is important to identify both sets of meanings and carry out an analysis from both perspectives of the parents and the individual.

The second premise states that meaning occurs as a social product, as opposed to being vested into us. Thus, meaning occurs for people through interaction with others within their immediate family, socialization or through interacting with other members of one's culture. Overall, it is a process of socialization where the social actor inquires about the various symbols, objects and their shared meanings and decides whether to accept, reject or modify them in some capacity. Through socialization, in addition to interacting with members of the host society the individual begins to gain different meanings about various concepts, objects and symbols, like mate selection, virginity, different foods, the generalized other (what others will think) and marrying within one's culture.

Finally, the third premise holds that every person has his/her own autonomous interpretation of the situation and the meanings it produces. An example would be

someone like my brother and I. Jack, my younger brother, is one who interprets the symbols and concepts of the Lebanese culture in a different light than me. As a result of being born and raised in Western society, my brother has, for the most part, assimilated so that he leads a life that is not ideal of a young Lebanese man. On the other hand, I am very active in our community and accept rather than reject the norms and cultural symbolism of the Lebanese community. Defining the situation relies on shared meaning and requires each social actor to concoct meaning in his/her minds about a particular situation. Each person acts on his or her own knowledge of the situation in terms of the roles and structure of the situation (Hewitt, 2003). Part of our everyday experience is the routine situation, which possesses congruent definitions that are taught to us and learned through our culture. However, one of the consequences of interaction is exposing oneself to problematic situations. For example, a proud and happy young woman runs to her father to tell him she is getting married; unfortunately, the father does not exude the same enthusiasm as his daughter, because the man she selected is not as good as the previous boyfriend, nor is he of the same ethnic background - Lebanese. As a result, both social actors in the situation - the daughter and father - hold dissimilar meanings and definitions of the situation, which leads the situation to become problematic. When individuals fail to share a definition or shared meaning of a situation an incongruous or problematic situation arises (Hewitt, 2003:148-9).

CHAPTER III: LITERATURE REVIEW

Symbolism of Language

One of the most important symbols in the Symbolic Interactionist paradigm is that of language. Simply, language is “a set of words used for communication and representation” (Charon, 2001:51; Hewitt, 2003:9, 39-40). Furthermore, language is a versatile concept that produces symbols in various forms - spoken or written - and is the basis for all other symbols (Charon, 2001:51; Hewitt, 2003:9, 39-40). Language produces words, which are an important mechanism for the social actor to communicate and interact with other social actors, in addition to labelling objects and defining situations. Language, including words, is essential to the application of symbols and their meaning. Words and language allow us to apply labels to certain objects, like, for example, a chair, classroom and with respect to this study certain roles, mother, father, brother, aunt, wife, husband, bride, groom, wedding and culture. Charon (2001) explains the definition of language put forth by Hertzler. For Hertzler, language is a “culturally constructed and socially established system of standardized and conventionalized symbols, which have a specific and arbitrarily determined meaning and common usage for the purpose of socially meaningful expression, and for the communication in the given society” (quoted in Charon, 2001: 53). Thus, language whether it is English, Italian, German or Arabic, is not merely a form of communication to transport messages across their respective societies. Rather, language is a powerful tool that shapes the course of interaction between many people in those societies (Charon, 2001; Hewitt, 2003; Holstein & Gubrium, 2003).

With respect to language and the Arab world, it is believed by many that it is an art form and in some instances poetic and symbolic in its delivery and understanding (Almaney & Alwan, 1982; Shouby, 1951; Zaharna, 1995). Halim Barakat is a renowned scholar on the Arab world who claims that language is the key to maintaining and sustaining an Arab identity. For Barakat, "language is not a mere instrument of communication or container of ideas and feelings; it is the embodiment of whole culture and a set of linkages across time and space" (Barakat, 1993:34). Thus, people who share the same language have a connection. Although they are thousands of miles away from their country of origin, they develop and sustain relationships in a similar environment abroad as a result of shared language. Moreover, not only does the Arabic language reflect the variations discussed by Barakat (1993), but several socio-historical forces have further influenced the role of the Arabic language for many Arabs. For example, as Shouby (1951) originally explains and Zaharna (1995) eloquently discusses, the role of the Arabic language extends as an art form, a religious phenomenon, and as tool of Arab nationalism. Zaharna (1995) outlines how the Arabic language is not only used for transferring information with a stress on factual accuracy, but the Arabic language appears to be a social channel in which emotional character is stressed. Zaharna (1995) reviews many great scholars and their contributions to the art of language. She concludes that Arabs normally differ from Western cultures with respect to their written and spoken messages and the cultural differences that exist between Arab speaking people and Westerners. First, the Arabic language is viewed as an artistic form, as Shouby noted, the "magical sounds of the words" combined with the images, have powerful effects on the psychology of the Arab (Shouby, 1951; Zaharna, 1995: 246). For Zaharna (1995), the

melodious sounds of the phonetic combinations and plays on words in the recitation of Arabic prose and poetry have been likened to music (Almaney & Alwan, 1982; Patai, 1973; Shouby, 1951). The Arabic language reserves certain poetic dialogue for many different symbolic situations. For example, Dr Ali Jihad Racy is a recognized musician, composer and expert in the field of Arabic music. More specifically, Dr Ali Jihad Racy is known for his emotional hymns for a funeral setting. His 1993 album entitled, "Ancient Egypt" is filled with eight sombre hymns that are meant for a funeral. Furthermore, the Arabic language can also be applied to times of happiness known as "farah". Here, we find the "magical sounds of the words" both Shouby (1951) and Zaharna discuss. In times of happiness (Farah) in the Arab culture, we find symbolic and historic songs and chants that represent the celebration of happiness. Thus, the Arabic language is extremely powerful and has long and deep traditions. It is unique from all other languages as it deviates from the norms found in other languages, for example, English. As Zaharna notes, Arabs tend to move away from the direct, to the point, clear, distinct and pre-determined linear approach to communicating with other Arabs. Rather, we find emotionally-charged messages shared by the Arab people.

For Zaharna, the two cultures (Arab and West) not only differ with respect to how they view and employ the tool of language, but they also exhibit distinct preferences in designing convincing messages. Examples of how the Arabic language differs from its Western counterpart are found in how the Arab language employs repetition and exaggeration in its messages. Both repetition and exaggeration in the Arabic language are both expected and symbolic to many situations. According to Shouby, it is not uncommon to find a sequence of descriptive phrases or words that refer to one

phenomenon in question. Not only is there repetition within a message, but often times repetition is used as a strategy among messages. For example, in 1951, Shouby observed a tendency of over-assertion or exaggeration by Arabs and understatement by Americans. Shouby's comments emphasize the important concept that the average Arab uses exaggeration and overemphasis without even being aware that he/she is doing so. Four years later, Prothro (1955) retested Shouby's theory and came to similar conclusions that Arabs were more likely to over assert their points compared to their American counterparts (Zaharna, 1995: 248). Symbolism in the Arabic language carries with it additional significance because of the Arabic language heavy reliance on over-assertion and exaggeration.

Certain dialogue that is exchanged by Arabs differs sharply from the Western way of communicating. For example, at a wedding, a simple remark of 'congratulations' is generally sufficient for guests to express at a North American wedding. Conversely, Arabs tend to be more emotional and direct with their choice of words at events like the wedding. For instance, it is not rare to hear a string of words that indicate congratulations, best wishes to the couple, parents and any single children the parents of the current couple may have (Inshallah, beit'hanou el ersan; tif'raie mein'oun ya r'eab; Ou Abeil el ba'yeen). What is more, the response by the guests is just as inclusive as the one extended by the guest. Without the over-assertion and exaggeration as Shouby notes, the dialogue lacks a certain level of emotion and merit, which may be misinterpreted by some Arabs. As Shouby explains, "Arabs are forced to over-assert and exaggerate in almost all types of communications, as otherwise they stand a good chance of being gravely misunderstood. If an Arab says exactly what he means without the expected

exaggeration, other Arabs may think that he means the opposite. This fact leads to misunderstandings on the part of non-Arabs who do not realize that the Arab is merely following a linguistic tradition" (Shouby, 1951).

Maintenance of Ethnocultural Heritage

Although the language of Arabic is a major symbolic fixture, Arab identity is not limited to language. Rather, one can be associated with a certain ethnicity by the food one eats, the cultural norms one follows and instil into his/her children and other culturally driven institutions or sects one belongs to. For example, since the mass migration of many Lebanese immigrants in the last one-hundred years, many stores, churches, mosques and social clubs have been established to help maintain one's ethnic identity in the host society (Ahdab-Yehia, 1970, 1974, 1983; Jabbra, 1984; Jabbra, 1987). For instance, St. Anthony's Maronite parish was established in 1984 to better serve the large Maronite community in Leamington. As well, the Leamington Lebanese Club was established in the mid-1970s to enable the Lebanese community to hold events such as weddings, First Communions, confirmations and other celebratory events shared by the growing Lebanese community. Establishing such institutions like the Lebanese Club and St. Anthony's Maronite Church allows the large Lebanese community to feel like they never left the old country.

Growing up in an ethnic house in a host society like Canada may be challenging at times. First generation Lebanese were brought up in a time where respecting one's family name and honour were pivotal, the father was the one with the last word and certain things like going out, having a sleep over, being sexually active and marrying outside one's village was, simply, unheard of (Barakat, 1993). Traditionally in the Arab

world, endogamous—arranged marriages were the only marriages permitted by the father. It was believed to be a sign of disrespect and dishonour if the daughter went against the mate chosen by her father. Additionally, Barakat (1993), Gullick (1955) and Jabbra (1984 & 1987) all note that endogamous marriages to other people from the same village, social class, religion and upbringing were preferred over the alternative. Finally, marriages of '*Bint and Ibn el Amn*' (daughter and son of paternal uncle) were very popular in Lebanese villages, especially northern Lebanon. Marrying one's *Bint* or *Ibn el Amn* is marrying one's first cousin (paternal). It is widely held in Lebanon that, by marrying one's paternal first cousin (*Bint* or *Ibn el Amn*), the value system, the socialization process and future goals will be the same, which avoids conflict in the grand scheme of things.

Marriage Patterns among Lebanese-Canadians

Although some traditions have been upheld by many Lebanese-Canadians, the notion of marrying one's *Bint* or *Ibn el Amn* has nearly been abolished by Lebanese-Canadians. It seems that with the number of years in Canada increasing, Lebanese parents have become more accepting of the idea of their son or daughter marrying other ethnic backgrounds or even Lebanese from different parts of Lebanon (Ahdab-Yehia, 1970, 1974, 1983; Jabbra, 1984; Jabbra, 1987). Nevertheless, one issue that has held strong through the years is religion. For example, a Maronite Catholic is reluctant to marry a Greek Orthodox Lebanese and would rather marry into another ethnic background that follows a similar religion like Roman Catholicism (Ahdab-Yehia, 1970, 1974, 1983; Barakat, 1993; Jabbra 1984 & 1987). The literature has been consistent with the fact that Lebanese-Canadians prefer to marry within their ethnic community.

Moreover, it not uncommon for families to plan a trip back to the old country and come back either engaged or even married. Some people resort to meeting someone and courting them for a brief juncture and marrying them to maintain the tradition of endogamous Lebanese marriages. In a study conducted by Jabbra (1984), participants were asked who they preferred to marry for themselves and their children in the future. The vast majority of participants selected Lebanese for both themselves and their children, citing numerous factors for their decision. Jabbra concluded that first-generation Lebanese feared marrying a Canadian woman or man because of their laid-back approach to childrearing. As well, Jabbra notes that first-generation Lebanese men feared the lack of family honour Canadian women exemplified and feared that Canadian laws would favour women if they were to engage into a marital contract and get a subsequent divorce. With respect to second-generation Lebanese respondents, the author sourced factors such as interacting in Canadian schools, workplaces and other social institutions that influenced second-generation Lebanese Canadians to marry outside their ethnic culture and thus differ from their parents in terms marital habits.

The Lebanese Wedding as a Process of Social Interaction among Lebanese-Canadians

A wedding is defined as a civil or religious ceremony at which the beginning of a marriage is celebrated (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002; Levin, 2001). In most societies, a number of wedding traditions or customs have emerged around the wedding ceremony and have followed certain cultural groups to other countries. Some elements of the Western wedding ceremony symbolize the bride's departure from her father's control and entry into a new family with her husband (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002; Levin, 2001). In modern Western weddings, this symbolism is largely vestigial, since the husband and wife are of

relatively equal power and status. The Western custom of the bride wearing a white wedding dress came to symbolize purity in the Victorian era. Within the "white wedding" tradition, a white dress and veil would not have been considered appropriate in the second or third wedding of a widow or divorcee. A wedding is often followed or accompanied by a wedding reception, at which an elaborate wedding cake is served. Western traditions include toasting the bride and groom, the newlyweds having the first dance, and cutting the cake. The bride throws her bouquet to the assembled group of all unmarried women in attendance, and the woman who catches it is supposedly going to be the next to wed. A fairly recent egalitarian equivalent has the groom throwing the bride's garter to the assembled unmarried men; the man who catches it is supposedly the next to wed (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002; Levin, 2001). Clearly, the symbolism behind the tossing of a paper-thin object runs deeper than a mere competition. According to wedding tradition, the one secures either the garter (for males) or the bouquet of flowers (for females) is said to be next in terms of getting married.

Traditionally speaking, people of the Arab world are extremely customary and superstitious. It is important to incorporate the historical context with respect to Lebanese wedding traditions and rituals, as they help shape the meaning of the wedding process and the wedding day practiced in a host society, Canada. The importance of studying the historical context is especially relevant to this study as many of the customs and traditions that shape the modern Lebanese Maronite wedding in Canada have been passed down through family generations, as well as enduring long-lasting traditions from the old country, which may be perceived as odd or unconventional to members of the host society. For example, some traditions and customs are still practiced that have been

around for hundreds of years. Thus, the history of wedding traditions is filled with superstitions and symbolic meanings that have been passed down from generation to generation from parents onto their children with the hope that one day they too will pass on the same traditions taught to them by their parents. The superstitions or rituals in Lebanese weddings extend to several traditions. For example, the mate you select, one's virginity, the singing of congratulatory poems by the women (usually the aunts of the groom and or bride), the placing of yeast dough over the grooms lintel upon entrance into his home with his bride for good luck, the gift of money rather than an actual 'goods gift', the music, the Lebanese dance known around the world as the *Dabke*, the throwing of money when the bride and groom have their first dance are among the traditions and rituals that are discussed in the thesis.

The Lebanese wedding begins, first and foremost, with the engagement (*khutbi*) of the couple. Traditionally, the groom-to-be asks the bride-to-be's father for permission to marry and, once obtained, the priest then blesses the rings which are worn on the *right* ring finger, symbolizing that the couple is formally engaged. This is a usual ceremony practiced by diverse groups across the Middle East. Gullick (1955) and Zarour (1953) note that this is a normalized process both in Lebanon and Jordan, respectively. After an engagement party and a Lebanese version of a *Jack and Jill* (*Laliee*) the groom (*al-ariis*) and bride (*al-aruuus*) are ready to get married. Similar to Canadian culture, the bride and groom do not see one another immediately before the ceremony. The bride and the groom get dressed separately, with the groom getting dressed at his or his parent's house while the bride is dressed by her friends and family, in addition to her future in-laws at her parent's house. Generally, the bride's side plays host to the groom's side, serving drinks

(*araq*) and candy-coated almonds. Additionally, both the groom's and bride's side engage in congratulatory conversation which consists of "*ahlan wa sahan; Inshallah tithunnuu*" (Welcome one and all; God willing may you be blessed on this special day) (Gullick, 1955:83). Before the two families proceed to the church, the bride is showered with "pre-marriage" cries of congratulations and future luck in her new life normally by older women, who are related to her or the groom. Relatives from the immediate families begin showering everyone getting ready with, "ii ya *Inshallah tithunnuu!* ii ya! Welcome to the beautiful bridegroom!" "*Eeeeeh!*" is what everyone else would reply to each of her sentences, "*ii ya Al-ariis wal-aruus*" concluding with a "*Lilililililililili!*". It is then customary for the groom's mother along with his aunts and cousins to drive to the bride's home to help with the dressing of the bride. Upon their entry a storm of "*Eh Weeeee-ha*" (Welcome to the beautiful bridegroom) is offered to which "*Eeeeeh!*" is the standard reply, along with "*Eh!*" "*Weeeee-ha!*" (May God give him happiness always) and concluding with a series of, "*Lilililililililili!*" which is showered on the bride, before proceeding to the church.

A Lebanese Maronite wedding ceremony is very similar to that of a Western Roman Catholic wedding ceremony. Guests are escorted in by the ushers and seated according to their relation to the bride or groom. The priest presides over the ceremony by asking the groom and bride a series of questions that will solidify their unity to one another. The best man (*Shbiin*) and maid of honour (*Shbiini*) witness the act and sign the marriage certificate in full compliance with the laws set out by the church. Following the vows and the blessing from the priest(s)¹, the couple is announced husband and wife. At

¹ In some cases, multiple priests are used to have representation from both the bride and grooms church (if they attend different churches).

this time, the bride and groom make their way outside where they are showered with rice (*rizz*) and cries of happiness and congratulatory remarks, *ii ya Inshallah tithunnuu!* "Eeeeh!" is what everyone else would reply to each of her sentences and then "*Ii ya Al-ariis wal-aruu*s concluding with a "*Lilililililililili*". After the wedding ceremony at the church, the bride and groom, with their bridal party and immediate family, depart to have pictures taken while the guests prepare for the reception. The throwing of the rice is a symbol of good luck and prosperity and in some cases stands for the fending off of evil spirits.

The wedding reception of a Lebanese Maronite wedding is very particular and unique. It is filled with loud music, money throwing, dancing and a number of guests. Similar to the old country, a receiving line is formed where the family and *Shbiin* and *Shbiini* (best man and maid of honour) greet the guests and exchange congratulatory remarks like *Inshallah tithunnuu* (If God wills, may you live in happiness and bliss) while the people involved in the wedding normally wish "*a-beiliak, a-beil binteek, ibneek*", which translates to "may your turn come, may your son's or daughter's turn come." Normally, a "favour" is given at the door, better known as the bomboniere as a symbol that you attended the wedding of the bride and groom. After the receiving line and congratulations ("*tehanyi*") has completed, an envelope filled with money is usually dispensed into a box or receiving fixture of some sort. The giving of money rather than actual "gifts" is discussed in David Cheal's (1988) work on rituals and gift giving where he outlines the preference of giving money rather than actual gifts among different cultural groups in Canada. Specifically, Cheal (1988) looked at Polish and Ukrainian families in the Winnipeg community and analyzed the ritual of gift giving at various

events. One of the events analyzed was the wedding and Cheal noted that most respondents surveyed preferred giving money as opposed to an actual goods gift. The amount of money given typically reflects the relationship between guest and bride and/or groom. For example, family members and close friends would be expected to give more money than, say, a high school chum. So, in the Lebanese community, it is customary for the immediate family and close friends to give the most money as a wedding gift. For those who are perceived as part of the general guest list, it would be expected that an amount be given that covers the cost of food and drinks. After the greetings have come to an end, the wedding party and bride and groom prepare for a festive ritual that has been carried several thousands of miles from the old country.

In Lebanon, it is customary for the bride and groom to walk down some sort of path and have family and close friends greet them with cheers of joy ("*farah*") and cries of luck and wishes to those who are single to get married. In addition, the crowd of family and friends would throw dimes and quarters as a gesture of good luck and for the youth to collect and have as their keepsake. However, those who practice the ritual of money throwing and singing cheers of *Farah* have taken a somewhat different approach in Canada. The centimes that echoed off the rural streets of Lebanon have been transformed to the throwing of the crisp American 1-dollar bill or 5-Canadian dollar bill as a sign of happiness, congratulations and luck in their future. In contrast to the old country where little children kept the money as a keepsake, it is the bride and groom who reap the benefits of the gracious ritual of throwing money onto them while they dance. Children, however, still often sweep or pick up the money and create a collections box that quickly fills as the night progresses. After the bride and groom have their dance, the

rest of the wedding party and guests engage in what is known as the *Dabke*, a traditional group dance.

Other Cultures and Their Traditions

Marriage is the most solemn pledge we make in our lifetimes. Traditionally the wedding pledge is made in front of family and friends who take special pains to stand up and witness our pledge. The wedding pledge is to be true, faithful, and loving to another human being. To wed is both the most basic of all human pledges, and at the same time the most sublime. It symbolizes many things. First, it represents the notion of entering a legally binding agreement with the person you are about to marry. Secondly, depending on one's religious affiliation, the pledge of marriage may be under the watchful eye of a supernatural being, for example, God, Jesus or Allah. Lastly, it symbolizes the notion of knowing this person you are pledging your love to is the one you want to marry and be with until the end of time.

Marriage carries with it the most somber of promises, but it also embodies the potential for the greatest joy of human existence. There are few joys in life as deep or as long lasting as the joy that springs from the well of true love and a lasting marriage. As Leeds-Hurwitz outlines, weddings are interesting to study as many different cultures place more emphasis or significance on certain rituals over others (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002: 8). Weddings are one of many rituals that are complex and that are comprised of many parts. The wedding incorporates a myriad of expectations and traditions (i.e. music, food, clothing, guest list and other symbolic objects). When studying the ritual of the wedding, many traditions and symbolic situations need to be taken into account. For example, the mate you select, the wedding shower, the stag and doe, bachelor party, rehearsal dinner,

the gift buying, and many more rituals and traditions that are carried out, before, during and after the wedding. However, every wedding will vary by culture. Some cultures place more emphasis on certain rituals over others. Where one culture may find the dress symbolic, another culture may find something like the guest list, food or music as the main concern. It seems that through many outlets like the media and other forms of modern technology, the North American wedding has been placed as part of mainstream culture or set as the 'status quo' (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002: 20). It has not been since recently that 'ethnic' wedding traditions have been investigated and studied, as everyone seemed to be immersed in the traditional white Victorian wedding. The wedding in and its self is a symbolic event. However, the rituals and traditions leading up to this day will vary by culture.

The Significance of the Wedding Dress

Communities use rituals to "convey information to members, making occasions of some significance (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002: 87). By definition, a ritual entails "an act or actions intentionally conducted by a group of people employing one or more symbols in repetitive, formal, precise, highly stylized fashion" (quoted in Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002: 87). Thus, in many cultures, the wedding ceremony is a public display of one's cultural traditions, rituals and shared meanings (Monger, 2004: X). For example, in the West and other parts of the world, it is widely believed that the colour white for the wedding dress symbolizes "purity, abstinence and virginity" (Fielding, 1942; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002: 87; Monger, 2004; Williams, 2003). The white dress is practiced as a symbolic ritual by certain cultures, as there is no formal connection between the colour white and the

concept of innocence (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002). This is made abundantly clear by the fact that different cultures hold and share diverse meanings and definitions for different types of dresses and the colours associated with different symbols and emotions. For example, in China the colour white is associated with death and the depressing situation that is the funeral. Thus, the colour red, which stands for happiness is used in times of joy and celebration, like the wedding ceremony (Hutchinson, 1974; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002: 87; Monger, 2004: 66). In Japanese culture, the bride is found wearing both white and coloured dresses. Similar to the Chinese culture, the colour white symbolizes “death or end. The symbolism of death or end and the emotion of sadness are represented by the colour white and these emotions are conveyed by the bride’s family as a sign of their daughter departing from their home. It is not until the third day of being married that the bride can wear coloured clothing, symbolizing the formal entrance into the groom’s home (Hutchinson, 1974; Monger, 2004: 65-6; Sukan, 2003: 48).

The Russian wedding also has a sad-joyful emotion attached to its rituals. Similar to the Japanese and Chinese cultures, the Russian wedding symbolizes both happiness and sadness as the bride is leaving her life of “certainty and freedom” with her parents to enter a life free of her parents with her husband and his family (Hutchinson, 1974; Mee & Safronova, 2003: 142; Monger, 2004). The bride will wear either a blue or a black dress, which symbolizes the emotion of sadness associated with the wedding day, while the white veil symbolizes the emotion of happiness and joy (Mee & Safronova, 2003: 142-3). This is also found in Slavic, Polish and other Eastern European cultures. Prior to the wedding, elder women, surround the bride and engage in ethnic rituals like prayers and

songs as a sign of the loss of “girlhood” and the departure of their daughter from their home to her husbands (Williams, 2003: 177).

While certain cultures like the Chinese and Japanese associate red and other colours with happiness, the French believe that a women who is marrying for the second time should not wear white, as she lacks the innocence and pureness often associated with the white dress (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002: 87). Other cultures such as the Alaskans practice traditions that are more indigenous where the bride wears an “*Inupiaq Atikluks*” or parka-style dress (Martin, 2003: 23). It is widely believed in Alaskan culture that animals and humans share a special relationship, and as a result brides wear these dresses made from various caribou, fish and bird skins to exemplify the human-animal connection, in addition to maintaining a certain level of tradition and authenticity (Martin, 2003: 27). A similar trend of tradition and authenticity is found in the Moroccan culture. In the Moroccan culture, the bride is dressed in a red scarf and white clothing while the married women apply the traditional art of henna to the body of the bride in conjunction with singing her customary hymns (Becker, 2003: 106, Monger, 2004: 198-9).

Traditionally, cultures in the Far East and Middle East believe the veil of the wedding dress represented the submission of women to their husbands (Fielding, 1942; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2001; Williams, 2003). In addition to the veil symbolizing submission, other cultures share a different definition in terms of its significance. For example, the Russian wedding defines the veil as a sign of happiness and a successful transition from the bride’s home into her husband’s family home (Mee & Safronova, 2003: 142-3).

Moreover, in certain cultures like in Slavic, Polish, Moroccan and Ukrainian weddings, the veil represents fertility and the protection from the “Evil Eye” (Becker, 2003; Mee & Safronova, 2003; Monger, 2004; Williams, 2003). Overall, different cultures around the globe hold these rituals and traditions very seriously and invest a great deal of faith into them. Analyzing cultures across the world allows for a broad sense of what others hold as sacred tradition. For example, what a certain culture may define as significant or sacred another culture may have a different meaning in mind.

The Significance of Old Superstitions

Wedding day superstitions have been around for as long as there have been weddings. Whether it is tying tin cans to the back of the “just married car” to the borrowing of something blue , and getting married when the second-hand is moving upward for good luck, many cultures make superstitions an important part of their wedding day. For example, in the Moroccan culture married women are said to possess a certain level of knowledge that single women lack. Thus, one married woman is designated as the “*Tamaccat*” (married women with most years married) and dresses the bride while the other married women circle the bride taking part in a ritual singing called the “*Izlan*” (Becker, 2003: 106-7; Monger 2004). This act of women surrounding the bride symbolizes that these women have knowledge of the sacrament of marriage and act as protector and provider of emotional support to the new bride-to-be (Becker, 2003: 106-7; Monger, 2004). Furthermore, some cultures contend that the bridesmaids who stand up in the bride’s wedding all wear the same dress to act as one unit protecting the bride from evil spirits (Monger, 2004: 121).

Many cultures fear evil spirits or the infamous “Evil Eye”. The widely held notion of the Evil Eye is that it is transmitted through malevolent influences that bring bad luck and misfortune to the bride and groom. In addition, it is believed that these evil spirits are most effective and active during specific times, such as the wedding (Monger, 2004: 121). As a result, members of diverse cultures across the globe tend to take precautions when their children are getting married. For example, some cultures like the Russian, Slavic, Polish and Moroccan cultures perceive the veil as a symbol of protection from these evil spirits. Moreover, other cultures like Middle Eastern and European families equip the bride and groom with charms or other forms of jewelry to fend off the Evil Eye (Becker, 2003: 110-112; Fielding, 1942: 65-66; Hutchinson, 1974: 73; Monger, 2004: 121). Finally, other cultures like the Chinese, English, Scottish and Irish believe that the throwing of rice (as previously noted) is, in fact, a symbol of joy and celebration, in addition to being a method of fending off any evils spirits that may be looming (Becker, 2003: 110-112; Fielding, 1942: 65-66; Hutchinson, 1974: 73; Monger, 2004: 121).

While some cultures utilize the influences of charms and rice to fend off old superstitions like evil spirits other cultures employ the art of dance or song. In Western society, it is customary for the bride and groom to have the first dance (Monger, 2004: 95-96). In the Lebanese community, we find the uniting dance of the *Dabke* where guests of the wedding gather in a circle and dance to up beat Middle Eastern folk songs. In Jewish communities, the *mozel tov* is employed as a symbol of good luck where a glass is wrapped in cloth and stepped on in conjunction with the words “*mozel tov*” (Monger, 2004: 95-6). Another symbolic dance is the “*Patch Tants*” otherwise known as the clap dance where married women begin the dance and invite the newly married bride in the

circle to symbolize her successful entry into the next phase of her life, marriage. Finally, some cultures dance with a certain food to symbolize an abundance of supply and wish them a fecundities life filled with food and happiness. For example, certain European cultures as the Irish, English and Scottish all used the likes of bread, cheese, thin and oatmeal cakes in their dance to symbolize fecundity (Fielding, 1942: 66; Hutchinson, 1974). Furthermore, in the Jewish community the *Kolitch* dance (solo dancer with loaf of bread) symbolizes the wish of the couple to always be filled with bread and nourishment.

The Significance of Gift Giving

Historically, gift giving at weddings was associated with wants and needs. For example, in Swazi and Korean cultures, wedding gifts consisted of everyday items such as grass mats, brooms, fabric, sewing material, wash basins and bath soaps (Hong, 2003: 56; Khoza & Kidd, 2003: 95). Conversely, with the advent of the wedding shower, the goods gifts like washers, dryers, blenders and the like are brought as gifts for the wedding shower. Thus, as Cheal noted in his research on families of Polish and Ukraine backgrounds, guests tend to bring a gift of money as opposed to actual “goods gifts” (Cheal, 1984; Cheal 1988). Other notable similarities are the Lebanese culture where you find close friends and family throwing money on the bride and groom as they dance. Moreover, the Greek culture has a ritual of pinning money on the bride and groom as they dance to their folklore music. Overall, the symbolism of getting married signifies a time of moving on and gaining independence. Thus, the larger community provides gifts of money to help the newly married couple start their lives together (Monger, 2004: X). For example, in Russian culture close friends and family scatter money around the

bedroom of the newly married couple, this is then swept up by the couple to keep as their fortune. Other cultures practice the throwing or pinning of money and coins, giving gifts of money in an envelope and other means of raising money by the larger community in an attempt to ensure a solid foundation for the bride and groom to start their new life together. In the Lebanese-Maronite wedding, it is traditional to bring an actual tangible gift. This was due to lack of resources for someone to place money in a card as people do currently all over North America. Presently, couples will bring a card with an undisclosed amount of money, leaving the actual tangible gifts for the adopted custom of the North American bridal shower. Thus, with the migration to another country like Canada come the adopted traditions and customs like bridal showers and the gift of money.

The Significance of the Mate –Selection Process

Members of certain cultures (Muslim in particular) carry out particular acts of ritual and place a certain level of emphasis on exacting details. For example, in some cultures, the mate you select is the most pivotal step in the wedding process. Some cultures allow for the independent choice of selecting the mate by the meeting, courting, falling in love and subsequently marrying of that person (Zaidi, 1999: 2). This is often termed the “Western” or “love” mate selection method as opposed to the arranged marriage method. In ethnic cultures that stress the notion of family honour and cultural norms, we find a tendency for arranged marriages to take place. For example, Middle Eastern, Pakistani, Indian and Chinese cultures all have at one time or another practiced the arranging of marriage. The mentality of family and cultural norms being a primary concern leads to the arrangement of marriage. Unfortunately, the concept of family,

honour and maintaining ties to the community to which one belongs, supersedes any feelings or opinions the couple may feel for or against the marriage (Zaidi, 1999).

In many cultures, when the parents feel it is time for the man or woman to wed, an older woman, traditionally referred to as the “go-between”, begins to find a mate to match for the bride (Hong, 2003: 53; Monger, 2004: 13-14). Thus, the value of the woman is contingent on her purity, family background and overall family honour. This, in conjunction with other qualities, will be taken into account for the “go-between” to find her a complementary mate. Other cultures in the Middle East often promoted the marrying of one’s first cousin, as previously noted. It is believed that the same value system will be employed that their parents were brought up following. However, with the advent of migration and assimilating the norms of host societies, the marrying of one’s first cousin has nearly been abolished. Instead, we find the marrying of similar ethnic and religious groups to maintain that sense of ethnic identity and a similar value system. For example, Leeds-Hurwitz describes the difference between an “in marriages” and “out marriage”. In-marriages are defined as marrying within your ethnic group, while out-marriage is marrying outside of the ethnic group (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002: 15-6). Leeds-Hurwitz (2002) notes that since ethnic groups have migrated to North America, there has been a growing tendency to marry outside one’s ethnic group as a result of interaction in schools, workplaces, social atmospheres and having different networks of friends in a host society. Nevertheless, those who decide to marry within their ethnic group are often doing so because there are similarities between the cultures, religion and overall value system. Thus, by marrying within one’s ethnic group a sense of comfort is felt as a result of knowing who you are marrying, understanding one another and the significant

symbols and meanings shared in that culture in addition to, in a sense, appeasing their parents and older generations by reproducing children under the same blood lines and ethnic identities.

CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As a renowned symbolic interactionist and qualitative social researcher, Denzin (2001) argues that interaction becomes symbolic through the utilization of words, emotions, language and meanings during the process of interpretation. Meanings towards these objects and that derive from these objects are created through the actions directed by the individuals involved in the interaction. Thus, it becomes difficult to capture the essence of a situation and the symbols involved through quantifying and utilizing the method of quantitative research. Therefore, by taking on an interactionist perspective of qualitative research, the researcher was able to focus on all the symbols and interactions in a study of the meanings the individual assigns to different situations. Denzin emphasises empathy. That is, while processing and analyzing an event or subject, the researcher must be able to interchange his or her biases with the perspectives of the individual(s) under investigation to avoid personal biases affecting or interfering with the perceived definition of the individual. Finally, Denzin states how theory and methodology must coexist in order to get an accurate interpretation of the social world (Denzin, 2001: Chapter 1). Overall, Denzin emphasizes capturing the perspective/experiences of those individuals being studied by putting oneself in their position (so to speak) and then relating these experiences and perspectives.

Interpretive Interactionism

The overall purpose of this study was to explore the meaning of significant symbols involved in the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding day. The main research question asks: (1) What are the main significant symbols involved in a Lebanese

Maronite Canadian Wedding Ceremony. Additional questions were also addressed such as: (2) What role does tradition and ritual play in the importance and implementation of these significant symbols in the Lebanese Maronite wedding day?, (3) How important are these symbols?, (4) What makes these symbols important?, (5) Who is more likely to deviate from using these significant symbols?, (6) Who is likely to marry outside the 'in-group' of the Lebanese community?, and (7) Will there be a difference in terms of defining the situation of the Lebanese Wedding between an older and younger cohort, and recent arrivals?

To better understand the aforesaid research questions, the researcher must investigate and seek information from those women and men who are both single and married, young and old, male or female and of Lebanese origin, to relate their feelings, emotions, experiences opinions and thoughts to the researcher about the significance of the symbols shared in the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite community like the wedding. Denzin (2001) contends that the most viable and functional method for grasping and understanding the experiences of individuals which are carried out in the everyday-social world is to allow oneself, as the researcher, to experience what the subject is experiencing through the process of Interpretive Interactionism. Interpretive Interactionism attempts to make the world of lived experiences accessible to the reader. What is more important, Interpretive Interactionism strives to capture and represent the emotions, values and actions of those being studied (Denzin, 2001:1-2). In the methodological field of qualitative research, "Interpretive Interactionists are interpreters of problematic, lived experiences involving Symbolic Interaction between two or more persons." (Denzin, 2001:32).

The Research Question(s)

The primary stage in the process of Interpretive Interactionism is to develop a research question or a set of research questions. In this procedure, the researcher must explain what phenomena are under inquiry. What is more important, when employing the work of qualitative methodology, more specifically, Interpretive Interactionism, the researcher must ask the *how* and not the *why*, because the researcher is concerned with *how* problematic, turning point experiences are organized, perceived, constructed and given meaning by interacting individuals (Denzin, 2001:70-71).

The Interview

Formulating the aforementioned research question(s), directly leads to the initiation of the interpretive process. When dealing with a topic of this magnitude and sensitivity, one must be cautious with the method of choice. Thus, the most logical and sensible method for this particular study would be to employ open-ended interviews and subsequent interpretations of those interviews. Moreover, the aforementioned method fits Denzin's interpretive interactionism and it is the best way to capture the perspectives and experiences of those under study.

Before proceeding with the interview, the researcher first laid out the research objectives into specific discussion questions, so that the information obtained through these open-ended interviews will provide the necessary data for analysis and hypothesis testing. Secondly, the interviewer acted as an aid to the interviewee by motivating them to share and explain detailed information from their experiences (Denzin, 1989:107). Denzin (1989) stresses the significance of wording one's questions that will be

appropriate to everyone being interviewed, in addition to ensuring the validity and reliability of one's research (Denzin, 1989:107).

The type of interview that was employed for this study was the unstructured schedule interview (USI) or non-standardized schedule interviews. According to Denzin (1989), in this type of interview the interviewer is able to gather information from the interviewee by redefining, reordering and rephrasing the questions to fit the characteristics of each respondent (Denzin, 1989:105). For example, the researcher in this particular study encountered respondents with language barriers and the interviewer had to rephrase certain questions in another language (i.e. Arabic/Lebanese). When conducting a study from an interactionist perspective, it is pivotal to empathize and see the situation through the perspective of the other social actor in the situation.

Interpretation

Once the data were collected, the next process was the interpretation of the information. Through what Denzin (2001) refers as 'thick description', the researcher is able to relate the perspective of the respondent and what the individual is feeling about a particular topic. Denzin (2001) equates this process to story-telling and places the researcher in a role similar to a messenger, where the interviewer conducts the interview, listens diligently to the interviewee and then subsequently conveys that story to the reader. This is all possible through a process referred by Denzin as thick description. Thick description is a process which captures meaning within a personal experience. For example, Denzin distinguishes between thin and thick description and how thick description elicits more meaningful interpretation from the interviewer and interviewee. Using thick description as a method of analyzing data allows the researcher to

contextualize an act, meaning and organize facts through the tool of interpretation. As a result, the researcher begins to analyze interaction(s) through thick interpretations. Through the utilization of thick interpretation, thick descriptions are interpreted. According to Denzin, it is here that the researcher begins to unfold and explain how events and defined situations have been construed, perceived or interpreted by the individual. Thick interpretation takes the reader to the core of the experiences that are being interpreted. What is more important, thick description assumes that all meaning is symbolic and functions at both the micro and macro levels of analysis (Denzin, 2001:52-53).

Data Collection

Data were collected using a two-fold qualitative methodological technique entailing both content analyses and face-to-face to interviews. Specifically, I examined ethnic group behaviour from a myriad of perspectives and qualitative research is the most conducive type of research for this particular study. Thus, this is why qualitative research was employed, because it captures the subjective activity of the group(s) in question.

The sample was drawn based on several factors. First, the participants were divided into different groups based on their gender, citizenship, age and number of years in Canada. Initially, the participants were divided into three groups: first and second generation Lebanese, and recent arrivals to Canada. First-generation Lebanese citizens were defined as those men and women who were born in Lebanon and are between the ages of 45-70. Second-generation Lebanese-Canadians were defined as those men and women who were born in Canada and are between the ages of 18-35 years old. Finally,

the recent arrivals were defined as those men and women who have been in Canada for five years or less and who are between the ages of 18-35².

Data Processing and Analysis

The data were processed and analyzed using a three-fold method. First, the researcher was a judge in screening 10 tapes of previous wedding ceremonies and receptions and out of those 10, 3 tapes were used in the final analysis. Tapes were considered based on material relevant/irrelevant to the research question(s). Second, a panel of 10 (a combination of men and women from the three abovementioned groups) judges assessed the videos, picking out and noting what they perceived to be significant symbols. After the data were collected and analyzed the researcher moved into the interview phase where 30 participants, 10 first generation, 10 second generation and 10 recent arrivals were asked a series of questions derived from the panel of judges who defined and interpreted certain acts or behaviours as meaningful or symbolic to the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding ceremony.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues should always be considered when undertaking data analysis. For the reason that the nature of qualitative observational research requires observation and interaction with certain groups of people, it is understandable why certain ethical issues may arise. Some of the ethical considerations that were adhered to throughout this thesis include:

² The reason why the age group is restricted to 18-35 for recent arrivals is because I feel that those who migrate to Canada in their senior ages will not have a flexible mindset and will adhere to the norms of the old country.

1. Informed consent- The participants will have full knowledge of what is involved through an informed consent form.
2. Harm and risk - The study does not place the subject under any risk or harm.
3. Honesty and trust- The researcher will be truthful prior to, during and after the collection of data.

Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity were maintained by using pseudonyms, having respondents sign a confidentiality agreement, and by ensuring that respondents understood what was required of them prior to any data being collected.

CHAPTER V: RESULTS

Preliminary Phase

The preliminary phase of this research entailed the primary researcher exploring several wedding tapes and subsequently selecting three for the final analysis. Wedding tapes were selected according to three phases: *Phase I: The dressing of the bride*; *Phase II: The Church Ceremony*; And finally, *Phase III: The reception*. Upon reviewing the three wedding tapes and defining a sequence of symbolic moments that occur in the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding, ten judges were recruited to complete the same task. The panel of judges consisted of nine women and two men (refer to table 3 on pp 120), who were responsible for analyzing three Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding ceremonies and asked to comment on and make note of any symbolisms that were present in the videos, or symbols that were not illustrated in the tapes. The panel included participants who ranged in age from 19-67 years of age and were a combination of first-generation Lebanese, second-generation Lebanese, and first-generation citizens who were born in Lebanon but migrated to Canada at a very young age (i.e. five or six years of age). As a result, the researcher feels that a diverse range of perceptions was obtained with regard to what different generations of Lebanese-Canadians descent define as symbolic to the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding ceremony.

Part I: The Dressing of the Groom and Bride

Throughout the three wedding tapes, common symbols were pointed out by the panel of judges for Phase I: The dressing of the bride. For example, a common theme found in all three tapes was the ritual of singing congratulatory (May you be blessed with

a prosperous future, filled with children and happiness); religious (May God overlook your marriage and fend off any envious eyes or evil spirits), welcoming, and chants of best wishes to all those who were single (May your child or you be next to get married). As well, clear gendered roles were defined, such as the men sitting in one room engaging in conversation, drinking and eating, while the women cooked, welcomed and helped in dressing the bride. Upon a married woman's arrival to the groom's house, she would entertain the other guests with some sort of traditional chant or song. For example, the elder women would stand at the doorway singing to the mother of the bride or groom, using symbolic language that is reserved for joyous situations like the wedding. This is often referred to as the "Zalghouta". In all three tapes, we witness either the mother or the father singing a traditional melody sending his/her daughter away to her new family. Although the groom is a significant role player in this symbolic day, it is the dressing of the bride that holds the most significance, according to the panel of judges.

In the early stages of migration, many people emigrated to certain ethnic pockets like Leamington, Ontario. As a result, it is common to find people of the same ethnic background as neighbours. Similar to the traditions and rituals of towns in Lebanon, residents of Leamington would marry within their ethnic group, and thus, would be marrying their neighbours. As a result, in the early years of marriage between Lebanese Maronites in Leamington, the groom's family and friends would *walk* to the bride's home, eliciting a mirror image of what transpires the day of the wedding in a Lebanese village. However, with the advent of subdivisions developing and the influx of homes erected, it is very uncommon to see people walking across towns, but rather, now driving to dress the bride. Nonetheless, whether they walk or drive to the bride's home, the

groom's family engages in ritualistic singing, asking for the mother of the bride to meet her and her esteemed guests. After the greeting has been completed, the women begin to sing and dress the bride as a symbol of the two families uniting. A common trend found in all three films is that only elder women who were married would engage in this ritualistic event of dressing and singing to the bride. This symbolizes that they (elder women) possess the experience of married life and have the knowledge to sing several poetic songs that date back hundreds of years.

With respect to dress and colours of the day, the common finding throughout all three films is that white was predominant for the wedding dress, which in some countries represents the perception of virginity and purity. Moreover, bridesmaids were dressed in the same clothing as a symbol of unity.

Part II: The Church

Before the church ceremony commences, there is the symbolic dressing of the cars with a pompon-type fabric indicating and symbolizing a joyous event. Moreover, as the cars parade down the streets to go to the church, loud honking is heard throughout the town/village or city. Judges 5, 6 and 10 noted that this particular "noise" was reminiscent of the old country where guns would be fired, so when others heard they knew that it is a time of happiness and celebration. As the bride exits the limousine, she is showered with rice, confetti and chants of happiness (May god bless you at your joyous event, may god preside over you in all you undertake etc). It is believed that the songs of good luck and the showering of rice or confetti onto the bride fend off any evil spirits or envious eyes present at this happy and joyous celebration.

The Church Ceremony is immersed in white décor with the bride's family and friends sitting on one side of the church, while the groom's family and friends sit on the other. All ten judges noted the traditional walking of the bride down the aisle by her father, while the groom meets them half way exchanging a kiss and handshake indicative of the bride leaving her family to be with her husband to start their new life together. At the beginning of the mass, both the mother of the groom and bride light a unity candle, which is then used as the flame to light the newly married couples light of unity. The bridal party is made up primarily of close friends and family members, siblings, first cousins and future in-laws. The Lebanese Canadian Maronite wedding ceremony is performed in both English and Arabic with certain Lebanese-Maronite traditions surfacing. For example, we observed the couple and witnesses standing the whole time, the placing of crowns on the heads of the four main characters in the situation, the bride, groom, maid of honour and best man. According to two local priests, the placing of the crowns on the four main characters (bride, groom, best man and matron-of-honour) symbolizes the fact that on this day the bride and groom are seen as a king and queen in the kingdom of God. Furthermore, the judges noted the significance of marrying within the same ethnic and religious sect, in addition to the priest making reference to the significance of a Lebanese marriage during his homily. After the church ceremony has ended, the couple sign their marriage certificate and proceed to solidify the marriage with a Western tradition of "kissing the bride". Following the church ceremony, pictures are taken, in addition to the throwing of rice and singing of religious chants. Again, we find elder, married women engaging in this ritual, however, with a certain religious theme (May God bless your

marriage, fending off any envious eyes, may God ensure happiness and prosperity and May you live and grow old together under the watchful eye of God).

Part III: The Reception

After the wedding ceremony has ended and the marriage between the couple has been finalized, a vibrant wedding reception is imminent. Judges throughout the three films noted the symbolisms of the guest list being so large, the amount of food available in the form of dinner, fruit tables and desserts, in addition to the music of choice being Lebanese. Moreover, other common themes found throughout the films by the judges include the introduction of the wedding party to the traditional beats of Lebanese folkloric musical instruments. Moreover, as the newly married couple are about to be introduced, the guests rise and begin to clap as the couple take part in a tradition referred to as the “Zaffi”. Here, again, we find elder women singing, dancing and greeting the couple, all in the presence of loud, traditional Lebanese instruments. After the couple has been greeted and led by dancing family members, the rest of the guests make their way to the dance floor and begin to dance and, in some communities, throw money on the bride and groom. Upon the completion of the *Zaffi*, the mothers of the bride and groom begin to sing welcoming chants, thanking, welcoming and bestowing the best of wishes to those families who have single children at home.

Upon the completion of the *Zaffi* in two of the films, the receiving line followed. However, it is common to find the receiving line to begin at the front door upon one’s arrival to the hall. Judges were quick to observe the gift of money as opposed to the actual giving of tangible gifts, like a blender, washer, dryer and the like. In some communities, the wedding shower is used as a time to purchase tangible gifts for the

bride and groom. In some instances, there is a registry that takes place, which ensures that the bride and groom receive what tangible items they want. After the receiving line and *Zaffi* have been completed, the guests engage in a night filled with drinking, dancing and celebration. The first dance in that is commonly found in North American weddings is normally to an English song. However, in all three films, the first dance was carried out to the beats of traditional Lebanese music. Here, we find more greeting and congratulations from family and friends, in addition to the showering of American bills on the couple. It is interesting to note that in the early 1990s 2-dollar bills were used to shower the newly married couple. However, with the advent of the Looney and Toonie, American bills have been substituted for the coin. The *Zaffi* then turns into a large circle that is known as the *Dabke*. Here, hundreds of guests engage in holding hands and moving in a circular, clockworks motion to loud and traditional Lebanese instruments. In keeping with some Western traditions, a Disc Jockey was employed to provide some North American music. Therefore, we had a shared cultural event, with the couple remembering their Lebanese roots, in addition to integrating their Canadian heritage.

Other Comments

The judges were given the option to add anything they felt that was missing and held symbolic meaning to the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding ceremony. The following symbols were not shown on tape, but were deemed significant by several of the judges.

First, as judges 1, 6, 7 and 8 all note, there is the yeast dough over the lintel of the new home. The placing of the yeast dough over the lintel of the new home is very “traditional and symbolic” to the Lebanese-Maronite community. An omen filled ritual,

the yeast dough is supposed to stick above the doorway for good luck. It is widely held that the yeast dough never fails to stick. However, if it fails to stick, it is considered a bad omen and bad luck will be brought to the marriage. Secondly, it is customary to bring a gift to the home of the bride when coming to dress her. It is a symbol of both families uniting and a token of appreciation for marrying into the family.

Phase III: Interviews

In this third and final stage of research for understanding the significant symbols of a Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding ceremony, participants were interviewed as part of what Denzin refers to the “capturing” and “bracketing” stages of interpretive interactionism. Thirty subjects were recruited based on their age, citizenship and how long they have been in Canada and were asked a series of questions related to Lebanese Maronite traditions and customs pertaining to the sacrament of marriage. Following the recruitment stage, the researcher grouped the subjects into three distinct groups: first-generation Lebanese, second-generation Lebanese and recent arrivals to Canada. In total, thirty Lebanese Maronites were interviewed from the Windsor-Essex County area. Moreover, the responses given by each participant were recorded as how they defined the situations and symbols of a Lebanese wedding in order to eliminate any bias from what the researcher may have perceived the situation to be defined as, and to overcome the limitations of the researcher to effectively capture definitions in participants’ own words.

Each interview summary was followed by the bracketing stage of Denzin’s model. Here, the summaries were broken down into main points and were subsequently compared to the other groups analyzed in this study. In addition, each respondent’s accounts and definitions of the situations and symbols regarding the Lebanese-Canadian

Maronite wedding were emphasized. In order to protect the identity and privacy of each respondent in the study, codes were assigned to each group. For example, First Generation was denoted as FG, Second Generation as SG and Recent Arrivals as RA (Please refer to table 4 on pp 121-122) for a complete list of respondent characteristics).

Results

Upon completing the thirty interviews, the following symbols emerged as significant throughout each group of participants. The following significant symbols are discussed with respect to the perceptions and comments made by first generation, second generation and recent arrivals:

- Mate selection
- Role of parents in mate selection/guest list
- Colour white and Virginity
- Dressing of the bride / traditional chants
- Church ceremony
- Wedding party
- Traditional chanting after ceremony
- Yeast dough ritual
- Wedding reception
- Receiving Line
- Gift of money
- Adoption/integration of Canadian customs
- Most important symbols

Mate Selection

Marrying within one's ethnic and religious group has been a debatable topic and, not surprisingly, elicited some diverse responses from the thirty participants interviewed. For example, many of the first generation (FA) participants believed it was extremely important for their children to marry within both the Lebanese culture and the Maronite religious sect for a myriad of reasons. Many of the participants cited the ideas of comfort, understanding and a shared sense of culture, which would limit the likelihood of

problematic situations in the marriage. For example, FG #1 a 53-year old married woman explains how marrying within-group is “very important” as “our culture is different than others and possesses certain behaviours that may deviate from others.” She additionally stated that as a result of these “cultural barriers”, if one decides to marry outside his or her ethnic group, conflict might be imminent. With respect to the issue of marrying someone within their religious group, she passionately felt that certain religions differ and “to avoid conflict”, one should marry within their own religious group. Furthermore, FG #2, a 68-year old married man, believed it was “ideal to marry within the Lebanese community.” Overall, all of the first generation participants interviewed echoed the same feelings about their children marrying within both the Lebanese ethnic group, in addition to the Maronite religion.

However, the second-generation (SG) participants had mixed reactions to the notion of marrying within both the same ethnic and religious group. For the first generation participants, it was an ideal situation for their children to marry another member of the Lebanese community. Conversely, for the second-generation participation it was found to be more of a convenience. For many of the second-generation participants (6 out of the 10), it was reported that marrying within the same ethnic group would be important for someone who wanted to reaffirm their cultural heritage and beliefs. For example, SG #2, a 21-year old single woman, believed that “it is extremely important to marry within your ethnic and religious group because of the cultural similarities, communication and wanting to maintain one’s ethnic heritage.” However, for the rest of the second-generation participants, marrying within one’s ethnic group simply makes things easier with respect to certain cultural practices, but is was not considered a priority

to marry another member of the Lebanese community. For example, SG #4, a 22-year-old single female didn't feel marrying within one's ethnic group was very important, but believed that one should marry within their religious group (i.e. Catholic) to maintain the same beliefs. She explained, "It is not so important to marry within my ethnic group, but I would prefer to marry another Catholic. That way, we can continue with the same religious beliefs and our children will have the same beliefs and sacraments as their parents." Here, we see the emphasis more on religion than on ethnicity. Furthermore, SG #3 was a 22-year-old single female who believed it was important to her parents that she marries within the Lebanese community, but not as important for her. SG #3 explained, "It is important, but not a priority. It is nice to marry someone within your own culture because there are commonalities. If it happens, great, if not, it won't be that big of a loss." Overall, the main theme that emerged from the second-generation group is less emphasis on the ethnicity of the mate as long as they were from a similar religious sect (i.e. Catholicism). There was an unequivocal consensus among all ten second-generation (SG) participants that it was important to marry within their religious sect. However, the second-generation respondents were split (6 to 4) in terms of the importance that is stressed with respect to the partner they chose to marry with more second-generation respondents reporting that it was what their parents would want or was a matter of reaffirming your ethnic heritage.

Finally, the recent arrival (RA) participants held similar beliefs to the first-generation group, but differed drastically from the second-generation participants. For the recent arrival respondents, it was commonly reported among the ten respondents to marry within one's ethnic group and religious sect. The majority of the participants (8 out of the

10) believed it was extremely important to marry within one's own group, as anything else would be unheard of. For example, RA #1 was a 21-year-old married man who immigrated to Canada in 2006. He believed that marrying within one's ethnic and religious group is extremely important and a common trend in Lebanon. He explained that "You marry someone within your own ethnic and religious group because there is a sense of understanding, you share the same culture and do not have to worry about differences like you would if you married someone who was non-Lebanese." Furthermore, RA #3, a 20-year-old single male who immigrated to Canada with his family in 2001, also believed that it is very important to marry within both your ethnic and religious groups. He explained, "It is very important to marry both a Lebanese and Catholic girl. It is important because you have a sense of comfort with marrying someone from your own cultural and religious background. It allows you to raise a family under the same traditions and customs you were brought up on. Also, marrying someone from your own religious group helps in avoiding conflicts."

However, there were cases where respondents deviated from the general recent arrival viewpoint. For example, in the cases of RA #9 and RA #10, it was believed that it was a matter of whether or not the couple treated each other well. First, RA #9 was a 34-year-old married man who immigrated to Canada in 2001. He believed that, traditionally, marrying within one's ethnic and religious group is extremely important and a common trend in Lebanon. However, he noted that certain people will marry outside their culture and religion and at that point, it is important that the woman or man is happy and that both are treated in a respectful manner. As he explained: "You marry someone within your own ethnic and religious group because there is a sense of understanding, you share

the same culture and do not have to worry about differences like you would if you married someone who was non-Lebanese. But, in some cases that is not applicable and when Lebanese people venture off to marry a non-Lebanese or non-Catholic, the main thing becomes that they treat the person right and that they are happy.” In the case of RA #9, a 34-year old married man, his sister married a non-Catholic and he explained to the researcher how it was hard to grasp at first, but that people around the town had to accept the marriage.

RA# 10, a 40 year old married man, also believed that marrying within one’s ethnic and religious group is extremely important and a common trend in Lebanon, traditionally. However, he is married to a non-Lebanese woman (Russian) and explained to the researcher that it was a difficult transition for his family to adjust to a non-Lebanese woman in their family. He expanded, “Traditionally, you marry someone within your own ethnic and religious group because that is what is expected. You share the same culture and do not have to worry about differences like those that you would if you married someone who was non-Lebanese. However, I married someone who was non-Lebanese and went out of Lebanon to marry her. I did not marry in the church, I brought home a non-Lebanese and my family just had to live with it and love and respect my wife as if she was Lebanese.”

Overall, the responses differed by generation from first to second-generation respondents. However, the first-generation and recent arrival respondents shared similarities in terms of what is expected and ideal for a mate. There were cases where people exercise the notion of free will with respect to choosing a partner to marry, which may become hard to adjust to, as RA #9 and #10 discussed. Both RA # 9 and RA # 10

concurred that marrying a Lebanese person is “ideal”; however, in their cases there was an exception. Clearly, there are predefined norms in small rural towns similar to the ones that most of the recent arrival participants were selected from. On a daily basis interaction is unavoidable and when it is time to wed, people have someone they share many commonalities with and resort to marrying their neighbour, essentially. As both RA #9 and RA #10 alluded to the researcher, it is the norm to marry Lebanese, and as a result, people have a difficult time adjusting to situations whereby people engage in the sacrament of marriage with a non-Lebanese partner.

Clearly, both groups of first generation respondents (first-generation—FG and recent arrivals—RA) shared similar views that in turn deviated from those opinions and responses of their second-generation counterparts. I believe that when one interacts with others in a common setting on a daily basis like many first generation respondents did growing up in small rural towns, that one’s likelihood to marry someone of the same background, values and ethnic-religious group increases significantly. Furthermore, this reinforces the cultural traditions that preceded them by their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. Conversely, as a result of being a product of Canadian society, as many second-generation Lebanese respondents are, they in turn find it difficult to place the same emphasis on the cultural norms their parents were brought up with. As a result of growing up and interacting with many more people in the Canadian school systems, workforce and social settings, it becomes increasingly cumbersome for first-generation parents to expect the same kinds of marriage patterns they were expected to carry out when they were growing up.

Role of Parents in Mate Selection / Guest List

Although parents want the best for their children, it was reported by all of the respondents that parents should act as an advisor to the situation of the mate selection process and allow their children to choose their own mate. For example, FG #1, a 53-year old mother of one replied that, "Parents should not play that big of a role. We raise our children, advising them, teaching them and hopefully they will follow our advice." Thus, this respondent does not endorse the idea of forcing certain notions and practices onto her child and prefers to trust her child's judgement in selecting a suitable mate. Likewise, FG #2, a 68-year old married man of one, believes in the freedom of choice and explained his reasons as follows: "We live in Canada where we have the freedoms and I will not force my son to do something he does not want to." Although FG #2 endorsed the notion of marrying within one's religious and ethnic group, he does explain that it the child's choice: "We raise our children a certain way and advise them accordingly. We are parents, keep advising, and do what is best for our children, in the end, as long as they are happy."

For some first-generation respondents, it was felt that the parents should play a significant role in the mate-selection process. For example, FG #4, a 70- year old single woman with no children, believed that ultimately it is up to the child to decide who he/she should spend the rest of their life with, but highly endorsed the notion of children taking the advice of their parents and allowing them to play an active role in the mate selection process. As she explained, "They (parents) have the experience in this matter of marriage." Similarly, FG #5, a 47-year old single male with no children, believed that the parents have a very important role in guiding their children, as they are the ones who

possess the experience in life and in marriage and can advise them accordingly. FG #5 expressed that, "Although parents want the best for their children, most of them want their children to marry within their religious and ethnic group."

For the second-generation respondents, the common theme that emerged was the fact that they (the children) would respect and consider the opinion of their parents concerning the mate selection process; however, they felt that, in the end, it should ultimately be the child's decision to choose a mate. To emphasize this point, SG #4, a 22-year old female whose parents immigrated to Canada in 1977, explained how she believes that her parents' opinion is valued when it comes to the mate selection process, but that her decision will not be altered if they disagree. She explained, "I will hear what they have to say and value their opinion, however, if my mind is set, they will not change my mind." Likewise, SG #5, a 26-year old single male whose parents immigrated to Canada in 1969, believed that the parents should play no role at all in the mate selection process. As he expressed, "They are my parents and their opinion will be valued, however, I will have the final say with regard to whom I marry."

For some people, like SG #1, a 56-year married man whose parents immigrated to Canada in 1949, it is important for parents to advise their children to marry Lebanese, and he speaks from experience. SG #1 is a father and explained to the researcher that he tries to encourage his children to marry within the Lebanese community: "I try to encourage my children to marry within our community because I know from experience that other cultures believe in divorce and have leverage for divorce. Very seldom do you see a Lebanese divorcing. I like the way we are so family and church oriented and not caught up with this notion of divorce." Further, some respondents like SG #2, a 21-year

old single female whose parents immigrated to Canada in 1977, believe that parents' opinion will be weighed the heaviest in the decision. As she explained, "They (her parents) have the biggest say. Parents have the best judgement for my well-being. If they feel someone is good for me, I want to know it and vice versa."

For the recent arrival respondents, it was already determined that one should marry a Lebanese Catholic. For example, RA #1, a 21-year old married man, explained how back home there are no arranged marriages, but parents advise their children on whom to marry and let them decide on the mate. He explained, "My parents raised me and guided me on a certain path. The way I was raised, I know to marry a certain type of woman. But the only thing my parents expect is she is Lebanese and Catholic." RA #3, a 20-year old single male, believed that his parents should play a big role in the mate selection process and he felt it was important to find some sort of balance between what the parents expect and what the child wants. According to RA #3, "Our parents were the ones who raised us and they know more and have experienced more things in life. Also, I believe that there should be a balance between what the child wants and what the parents believe in."

Although the majority of respondents agreed that the parents should act as only an advisor in the mate selection process, it was commonly reported by all three groups that the parents play a significant role in the guest list process. For the majority of the thirty respondents, a sense of obligation was an important theme with respect to the preparation of the guest list. Attitudes varied by generation in terms of agreeing with this sense of obligation, but nonetheless, all three groups acknowledged this sense of obligation when formulating the guest list.

First-generation participants expressed a sense of pride and elation in having their children marry and they wanted to participate in this special day by inviting certain family and friends to this occasion. For example, FG #6, a 70-year old married man and father, explained the importance and significance the wedding day has and the obligation to invite certain friends and especially family. He reflected, "This is one of the happiest days in my child's life and I want to share this feat with my close friends and family." Likewise, FG #5, a 47-year old single male, commented on the "sense of obligation" with respect to the guest list: "On this joyous day, the parents want everyone from family and friends to co-workers to enjoy this day. Also, there is a sense of obligation when inviting certain people, as in our community it is a sign of disrespect if one is invited to a wedding and does not reciprocate the invitation." FG #7, a 46-year old married man, summed it up the best by explaining how the guest list is interpreted in the Lebanese community. For him personally, it is all about family. He explained, "I am a big family man. I want my entire family there and everyone else is secondary." However, he did allude to the sense of obligation of returning the favour to past "inviters". As FG #7 explained, "Although family is the most important, in our culture if you were invited to a wedding, you should return the favour out of respect. Otherwise, people will become offended." Thus, to avoid any social ramifications within the Lebanese community, one is expected to return an invitation they may have received.

Attitudes toward guest list preparation change drastically for the second-generation group of respondents. Overall, it was reported that the parents should take on the role of formulating the guest list. However, some respondents did not agree with having a large guest list and did not endorse this sense of obligation that exists in the

Lebanese community. SG #2, a 21-year old single female, explained how her parents will likely shoulder the guest list responsibilities, in addition to explaining the sense of obligation that her parents owe other people in the community. She explained that there are some people she is unaware of that her parents may want there. SG #2 described that, “My parents will be in charge of my guest list. There are certain relatives I am not aware of that need to be there. Also, if my parents have been invited to past weddings, we need to reciprocate the gesture.” SG #4, a 22-year old single female, also explained the importance of her family being a part of the creation of the guest list, but admitted that she does not want people she does not know at her wedding. She believed that her parents should play a large role in inviting certain people to the wedding, for example, distant relatives and people that her parents may have a sense of obligation to return a previous invitation. However, she expressed concern with inviting people she did not know who were not family. She explained, “My parents may have a sense of obligation to invite them, but if I don’t know them, I don’t know if I want them at my wedding.”

SG #6, a 32-year old female and SG #7, a 36-year old female, are both second – generation Lebanese Canadians who are married with young children. They both have had the traditional wedding and did not believe in the sense of obligation that was widely practiced by their parents’ (first-generation) generation. SG # 6 explained that she would not go as far as her parents did. “My parents went overboard, I think. They invited everyone who invited them and it makes for a larger than necessary wedding. I know that I won’t be going as far as my parents when my children decide to get married.” Similarly, SG #7 believed that parents should have a say in the guest list because they may want certain people to be invited. However, she does not endorse the sense of

obligation that is owed to people who invited her to past weddings. As she explained, “If someone invites me to their child’s wedding this year, I won’t invite them in twenty-years when it is my turn to marry my children.”

Finally, for the recent arrivals, until recently, the process of formulating the guest list was strictly the job of the parents and was a very intimate process. Traditionally, parents of the couple would visit the homes of those they wished to attend their children’s wedding and a formal, verbal invitation was expressed. Explaining the process of a traditional Lebanese guest list, RA #1, a 21-year old married man, explained how the guest list is an adopted Western tradition. He explained to the researcher that back home there was no such thing, until recently, as a guest list and invitations: “Back home there are no guest lists or anything of that sort. The invitation process includes the parents of the couple going to the homes of those to be invited and physically inviting each guest to their children’s wedding. There are no cards, RSVP or anything like that.” Embedded in this rich tradition of face-to-face interaction of inviting guests to the wedding is the sense of obligation to invite certain people. According to RA #6, a 38-year old married woman: “There are certain people who need to be invited and will become offended if they fail to receive an invitation. So, the parents should be in charge of the guest list, so there are no problems.”

The Colour White and Virginity

The colour white was given multiple definitions by all three groups of respondents. The common definitions that reoccurred were purity, virginity, innocence, new beginning and one being free from sin. For FG #1, a 53-year old married woman, the colour white is very important to the Lebanese community as it represents purity and

happiness, and symbolizes the first time one engages in the sacrament of marriage as well as indicates that the bride is still a virgin. He explained, "The colour white to me means many things. First, it means happiness, freedom, peace and something that is pure." Further, SG #3, a 22-year old single woman, explained her view of the colour white: "It is uncommon for the colour white not to be present at a wedding. In the case the dress is cream coloured or off-white, it means that the bride has children or has been married before."

The maintenance of virginity was explained by all respondents as traditionally being important in Lebanon and most expressed the social repercussions that would result if a woman was not a virgin at the time of marriage. For example, one repercussion might be for a man to return his wife back to her family if she failed to save herself for marriage. For first-generation respondents, it was important for a woman to be a virgin. However, these respondents realize that times have changed and would not condemn someone for not maintaining their virginity until marriage. For example, FG #1 believed that the maintenance of virginity by a young woman was extremely important to the Lebanese Maronite family. However, she understands and believes that times have changed and that people all over the world are engaging in pre-marital sex. She explained how "in the old days if you were not a virgin, the groom's family could send the bride back to her family." She noted how the times have changed and how dating and going out was literally a taboo in Lebanon, but when one migrates to a host society, "it is difficult to maintain such rules." FG #2, a 21-year old single female, further explained that the maintenance of virginity is important to families who have a daughter, but argued that such families would not act in an extreme way as they once did in Lebanon. As FG #2

explained, "It means a lot for parents who have girls. However, if my son wants to marry a non-virgin, this is up to him and her."

For second-generation respondents, the responses were somewhat mixed. Some felt that it was very important to maintain the values that their parents bestowed onto them, while others felt it is a clash of the generations with respect to the topic. For example, SG #2 believed that the maintenance of virginity by a woman is very important as she explained, "It is very important to maintain your virginity until marriage. You are protecting your family name and honour by saving yourself for marriage." Furthermore, SG # 5, a 26 year old single male, reinforced the notion of saving yourself for marriage. He explained that maintaining a sense of virginity is very important and that we are taught to remain virgins until marriage: "It is very important to save yourself for marriage. It was the way we were brought up, to be with one person, the person we would spend the rest of our lives with."

Although most of the people interviewed believed that maintaining a sense of virginity is important, some respondents expressed that it is hard to save yourself and did not place that much emphasis on the maintenance of virginity. For example, SG #3, a 22-year old single female, agreed that the maintenance of virginity is extremely important to the Lebanese family and personally feels strongly about it. However, she explained how times have changed, "It was the way we were brought up, you know, constantly drilled in your head. It is important for me because I personally feel one should be with the one person they will spend the rest of their lives with. If a girl is not a virgin she will definitely be frowned upon. However, times have changed and there is a definite difference between 'the old generation and new generation' and whether being a virgin is

important.” For SG #7, a 36-year old married woman, it was believed that there is a difference among the generations and what they perceive to be important. When asked about the maintenance of virginity she replied, “For the Lebanese family it is extremely important, for me personally, not so much. I would never judge anyone if they chose not to wait until marriage.”

Finally, the recent arrivals maintained very traditional views on the issue of virginity and believed that a woman should not be dating, socializing or engaging in any type of sexual acts prior to marriage. RA # 1, a 21-year old married man, explained how the woman in Lebanon has to be a virgin, otherwise no one will marry her: “A girl cannot be going out every night and have several different boyfriends prior to marriage. She has to be a respectable figure in our community, be a student, go to church and help around the home. Otherwise, her reputation will be tainted and no one will marry her.” Similarly, RA #3, a 20-year old single male, believed that it is important for a woman to maintain her virginity. RA #3 explained, “She must be a virgin, for sure. It is very hard to marry a non-virgin in our culture. She has to be pure. This is why you marry a Lebanese girl from Lebanon.” Although the tradition of “checking” one’s virginity is not as widely practiced across Lebanon, people do still hold strong feelings about saving oneself for marriage. As RA # 8, a 31-married female, put it, “It is unheard of to be a non-virgin before marriage. If the girl is not a virgin, her reputation around the village will be tainted and no one will end up marrying her.”

Dressing of the Bride / Traditional Chants

The dressing of the bride ritual was defined by all of the respondents as a time of acceptance and celebration. This ritual was symbolic of the groom's family accepting the bride and welcoming her into their family. For FG #2, a 68-year old married man, the ritual of the parents of the groom going to the home of the bride's family to dress her is a long-standing tradition and he remembered when his mother and aunts went to dress his wife. FG #2 recalled, "It is a long standing tradition that dates back to my wedding as well. Elder women walk to the home of the bride's parents and engage in singing and then escort her to the church." When asked what this symbolized, FG #2 responded, "It symbolizes the welcoming of the bride into her new family."

For the second-generation respondents, the dressing of the bride ritual was acknowledged by some as a time to unite two families and to welcome the bride into her new family. However, others admitted not really understanding the ritual. For example, SG #4, a 22-year old single female, agreed that she has seen the ritual of the dressing of the bride, but had no idea why the ritual takes place or any of the symbolic meaning it has to the Lebanese community. She explained, "I have seen it many times, but I don't really understand what symbolic meaning it has." When asked a follow-up question on whether she would take part in this ritual if she married a Lebanese man, she replied with, "If I marry Lebanese, I probably will have it. I don't know if that's what I want, but I am sure someone will explain the significance to me before it is done."

Some felt that the dressing of the bride ritual was unnecessary to the wedding and expressed that they did not understand why it takes place. For example, SG #3, a 22 year old single female, explained how she does not understand or fully agree with the dressing

of the bride ritual. She reflected “It’s almost like an initiation of some sort. I personally don’t agree with the ritual because it is your last day with your family and I don’t see why it is necessary to have your future in-laws barge in on my last day with my family.” For SG #5, a 26-year old single male, the dressing of the bride ritual does not seem to be very important to the younger generations and explained how it is up to the individual person to go and should not be mandatory: “The dressing of the bride is mostly for the old generation. I mean, when I get married, I wouldn’t want it to be a mandatory thing at my wedding. If my wife or I don’t want it, we won’t have it.”

For the recent-arrival respondents, the dressing of the bride ritual was explained as a long-held custom that covered many generations. Similar to the responses of the first-generation group, recent-arrival respondents defined the dressing of the bride ritual as symbolizing the welcoming of the bride into her new family, in addition to being accepted as a worthy bride for the groom. RA # 1, a 21-year old married male, explained that the dressing of the bride is very popular in Lebanon as it represents compliance and acceptance of the marriage. He explained the process, “The day of the wedding, the mother, aunts and other women related to the groom walk over to the bride’s home and engage in traditional chants and help in dressing the bride. This means that the groom’s side agrees to the marriage and is expressing their approval through song and being present at the dressing of the bride.”

Furthermore, the traditional chants were explained to be synonymous with times of joy and happiness (“Farah”). Here, elder women would engage in traditional hymns that ranged from telling the bride how beautiful she was in her dress, welcoming her to her new family and asking God to bless the couple on their special day. While this was

widely understood and explained by both first-generation and recent arrival participants, respondents from the second-generation group admitted to not understanding the lyrics in these traditional chants. For example, SG #2, a 21-year old single female, acknowledged that she does not understand all the words used in the traditional chants, but did explain that she understands the symbolic meaning: “This ritual is usually carried out by a mother, aunt or grandmother expressing advice and good wishes on this special day.”

The Church Ceremony

The church ceremony was reported to be extremely important by all of the respondents. Traditionally, Lebanese Maronites are very religious and believe that the wedding is null or void if it does not occur in the Maronite Catholic Church. Some of the respondents explained the ceremony in greater detail than others, but all of them emphasized the importance of being married in the church. For example, in describing the importance of the church ceremony, FG# 10, a 46-year old married female, explained, “A marriage is not official in the Lebanese community if the church certificate is not signed by all parties involved, bride, groom, best man and matron of honour.” Similarly, FG # 5, a 47-year old single male, explained how important the sacrament of marriage is to the Maronite rite as it differs from every other religious practice. As FG # 5 elucidated, “The Lebanese wedding ceremony is like no other. On this day, the bride and groom are the ‘King and Queen’ of God’s majesty and the guests act as their royal audience. This is practiced using crowns that the priest places on the heads of the bride and groom and the matron of honour and best man.” The Lebanese wedding ceremony was described to be a sacred time and how there are no alternative marriage arrangements that Lebanese people traditionally believe in. For example, there are no common-law or civil marriages that

take place in Lebanon and the ten subjects agreed that their child should be married in the Catholic Church.

While first-generation respondents emphasized the significance of having a traditional Lebanese wedding, most second-generation respondents did not allude to the Lebanese practices, but did stress the importance of marrying in the Catholic Church. For example, SG #2, a 21-year old single female, made clear, "The church ceremony is the main part of the wedding because if you are not married in the Maronite church, it is not considered a legitimate marriage under God's eyes." Likewise, SG #3, a 22-year old single female, believed the church ceremony is very important to the Lebanese wedding. She stated, "The church ceremony is extremely important to the Lebanese wedding. We have different cultural traditions and rituals that differ from other religions and we cannot forget our culture." Also, SG #3 described how marrying outside the church (i.e. at city hall, in front of a judge etc) is unacceptable, "I go to this church every Sunday and that is where I want to be married. Also, Lebanese people do not believe in that kind of marriage. If you want a true Lebanese wedding, you need to be married in a church."

Finally, for the recent arrival respondents, the church ceremony was the most important part of the Lebanese wedding. Throughout the interviews with the recent arrivals, the common theme was that a wedding outside the Maronite church was not considered a legal marriage. During the interviews, the researcher was informed that in the case of a civil marriage, one would have to go to Cyprus to obtain such a marriage. The Lebanese wedding ceremony was explained by all the recent arrival respondents as a time where the bride and groom are the King and Queen of God's Kingdom. Symbolic moments include the crowning of the bride and groom, followed by a procession. In

describing the importance of a Lebanese church ceremony, RA #2, a 22-year old married man, explained, “The church ceremony is very important. It is the one official ceremony that brings the couple together. There are no civil marriages in Lebanon, and to us, those types of marriages are superficial. There is no ceremony like the Lebanese wedding ceremony. On this day, the bride and groom are the king and queen of God’s kingdom and this is symbolized by the placing of the crowns on the heads of the groom and bride, in addition to the best man and matron of honour.”

The Role of the Wedding Party

Overall, for most of the first-generation respondents, the role of the wedding party was reported to be not very important. They explained how the wedding party was nice to see, but it held no significance to the bride and groom. Traditionally, in a Lebanese wedding, the wedding party consists of the best man and matron/maid of honour. Additional members of the wedding party were described to be an adopted custom. For FG #2, a 68-year old married man, the wedding party after the best man and matron/maid of honour are “just for show.” Traditionally, FG #2 explained, “It is the best man and matron/maid of honour who are the most significant. Everyone else is just there for show and support.” Both the matron/maid of honour and best men are friends of both the bride and groom and are expected to act as mentors, advisors and mediators in times of distress.

The role of the wedding party for the second-generation respondents was split between those who thought “the bigger the wedding party, the bigger the show” and those who felt it was a sign of support made up of close family and friends. Some were able to tell me the traditional wedding party structure of the best man and matron/maid of

honour only, while others gave the North American definition of the wedding party being made up of family and friends who are there to offer moral support. For example, SG# 2, a 21-year old single female, explained the wedding party as an opportunity for close friends to stand up in moral support of the couple on their special day. She understood the wedding party to be extremely important to both the bride and groom. According to SG #2, "These people are normally close friends of the bride, groom, and are there for moral support on their special day." Furthermore, SG #5, a 26-year old single male, explained how certain people become offended if one fails to invite them to stand in a wedding party. SG #5 understood the wedding party to be made up of people who are close to either the bride or groom and if certain people are not asked to stand, people will get offended.

As a result of people becoming offended, large wedding parties and trying tirelessly to please everyone, many second-generation respondents reported that they would do without the large wedding party. SG #6, a 32-year old married woman, explained how in North America the wedding party is overdone and that one only needs a close friend/family member to stand as their best man and matron/maid of honour. SG #3, a 22-year old single female, further explained, "I have been to Lebanon and they only have a best man and matron/maid of honour. I think the large wedding parties are an adopted custom, and personally, they are overdone in my opinion. All someone needs is a close and reliable friend to act as their wedding party." SG #7, a 36-year old married woman, also commented, "The bigger the wedding party, the bigger the problem", which further emphasizes this point. "You always have to make sure you're respectful and ask this person to stand, that cousin to represent this family, but in the end, there is always

someone asking why they didn't stand and so on. So, in my opinion, it should be the bride, groom, matron/maid of honour and best man, that's it."

For the recent arrival respondents, the traditional wedding party consisted of a best man and matron/maid of honour. It was their view that the big wedding party structure is an adopted custom and is not practiced in Lebanon. RA #5, a 44-year old married man, clarified, "There are no big wedding parties, just the best man and matron/maid of honour. These two people have an important role in the marriage. They are acting as witnesses to the marriage on the day of and are also tied to the couple for the remainder of their lives." Also, the roles of the matron/maid of honour and best man follow a strict order normally represented by a brother/sister, cousin, and uncle/aunt and in the last instance a close friend of the family. The best man and matron/maid of honour act as life long friends to the marriage, witnesses to the marriage and, in the case of turmoil, mediators in the marriage. RA #3, a 20-year old single male, explained, "They will act as godparents, advisers and mediators in times of distress. So, they have to be someone close to you, a brother, uncle and as a last resort a close friend."

Traditional Chanting after Ceremony

Overall, the ritual of traditional chanting was reported as reserved for times of happiness and celebration. The Lebanese culture is one that expresses many emotions and feelings. However, the traditional chants are only associated with times of elation and happiness. Thus, when someone is married, the town is filled with traditional chants with lyrics of blessings, congratulations and good luck showered onto the bride and groom. After the church ceremony, it was widely believed by both first-generation and recent arrivals that the marriage is official and nothing can come between the couple. For

example, FG #1, a 53-year old married woman, and RA #7, 31-year old married woman, explained why more chanting occurs following the wedding ceremony. RA #7 noted that at this time, “Elder women engage in traditional and religious chants asking God to bless this marriage and to fend off any evil spirits.” FG #1 further explained to the researcher that in the Lebanese community there is a shared sense of relief upon the successful completion of the church ceremony that “it is official and God is the witness.”

Most of the second-generation respondents were unable to elaborate on the general responses of expressions of happiness and elation for the traditional chants. Unlike their first-generation and recent-arrival counterparts, second-generation respondents did not know the significance behind the chants and what symbolic meaning the church possessed to elicit such a response filled with happiness.

Yeast Dough Ritual

The yeast dough ritual is a long-standing, deep tradition practiced in many Lebanese communities accompanied by both a bad and good omen, depending on the outcome of the ritual. Legend has it, that if the dough sticks, it is a good omen filled with prosperity and wealth. However, if the dough fails to stick, it means the marriage was not meant to be. The reason why so much is invested in the yeast dough ritual is because yeast is a main ingredient in making bread and in the Lebanese culture, placing a piece of yeast over the doorway of the new home of the couple is symbolic of fruitfulness and prosperity for their eternal life together (if it sticks). Moreover, as many first-generation and recent arrivals explained, some people make the sign of the cross in the yeast dough to add a religious element to the ritual, while others break an apple or pomegranate next to the dough for additional luck.

For first-generation respondents, the yeast dough ritual was widely practiced and was explained to have deep symbolic meaning. For example, FG #10, a 46-year old married woman, elucidated, “In our culture the yeast dough is a sign of prosperity and good fortune, if the dough sticks.” Thus, if the dough sticks, it is said to bring a life filled with luck, prosperity and good fortune. However, in the event that the dough does not stick, this is said to be a bad omen. Similarly, recent arrivals also explained the significance of the yeast dough ritual. For example, RA #7, a 42-year old married woman, described the yeast dough ritual as, “A blessing from God, to bless the home with wealth and prosperity.” She explained how the yeast is symbolic as it is the main ingredient to make bread and “bread is symbolic of fruitfulness and prosperity.”

Conversely, for second-generation respondents, all ten participants vaguely described the yeast dough ritual as a blessing. Most admitted that it was a nice gesture but that they had no understanding of the omen that is understood by many first-generation Lebanese people. For example, SG #7, a 36-year old married woman, understood the long held tradition of placing the yeast dough over the lintel of the new home as a blessing to the home, but did not know the omens behind each case. She explained, “I know it is carried out to bless the house, but I don’t know what happens if the dough sticks or not.”

The Lebanese Wedding Reception

The wedding reception was simply described by all the participants as a time to celebrate with family and friends. However, the definition of the situation varied with respect to the different groups. Overall, festivities included eating, drinking, singing and dancing. For most of the first-generation respondents the Lebanese wedding reception

was described as a time to “celebrate with family and friends”. However, many first-generation and recent arrivals described the differences in a North American Lebanese wedding from a traditional Lebanese wedding in Lebanon. Many concurred that the wedding reception in North America differs from that in Lebanon such as in Lebanon, there is no wedding reception in a hall, guest lists or anything of that sort. Traditionally, the bride and groom would have a little reception in the streets of their neighbourhood with everyone acting as guests. The North American version of a Lebanese Maronite wedding reception involves wedding halls, bands, food, dancing, singing and the like. However, it was reported that currently couples in Lebanon are reserving restaurants and bands similar to couples in Canada and having a more formal wedding reception.

For many second-generation participants, the wedding reception was defined as louder and in some cases more dramatic than any other reception they had been to. They all explained how the music is louder, the guest lists are greater and the Lebanese wedding reception is an overall bigger deal than other receptions. To emphasize this point, SG #3, a 22-year old single female, explained how the introduction of the wedding party and bride and groom are different from a North American introduction. She expressed how Lebanese people tend to be more dramatic: “We are so ‘drama’, like look at me. Like, a North American wedding it lasts for a couple of minutes and it’s over, not us! We pull out the money, we dance in front of the couple and bring attention to ourselves. It’s like when there is a funeral, we are just so dramatic and that’s what makes us so unique, I guess.”

The Lebanese Receiving Line

Traditionally, the receiving line at a wedding is reserved for hosts to welcome their guests and for the guests to wish the couple and parents congratulations. However, the Lebanese receiving line differs substantially from any other wedding receiving line. At a Lebanese wedding, the receiving line includes the traditional wishes of congratulations and thank you by the guests and hosts, respectively. However, also found in the Lebanese receiving lines are certain expected responses by the guest and host. For example, when asked about the importance of a Lebanese receiving line FG #3, a 22-year old single female, explained that this is a time where people engage in specific dialogue. FG #3 explained that the guests wish the bride and groom luck and congratulations while the bride and groom and parents of the couple reply with either “Abelik” (“May you be next to wed”) (For a single guest) or “Abeil le la endeek” (“May whom ever you ever have at home be next”)(for guests with children). A common understanding is shared by all of the respondents with respect to the unique dialogue that is expressed.

The Gift of Money

All first-generation and recent arrival participants explained the gift of money as an adopted custom. It was reported by all participants that, traditionally, the gift of money was not given at a Lebanese wedding. Rather, guests would bring whatever they could to help the couple start their lives together. Illustrating this point, one first-generation respondent explained how guests would traditionally bring household appliances to the home of the married couple. However, in North America, there is often a wedding shower to which such gifts are brought. At the wedding, the guests bring an envelope

filled with money, as FG #5, a 47-year old single male, explained, “To help the couple start their new life together.”

For second-generation respondents, the gift money was a gesture to help the couple begin their lives together. For example, SG #9, a 25-year old single male, believed that, “The gift of money is a token to help the newly married couple start their life together.” On the other hand, some respondents believed that the gift of money was something that is expected. As one second-generation put it, “The gift of money is expected at a wedding. I mean anything else would be embarrassing. The household appliances and actual gifts are given at the bridal shower, not the wedding reception.”

For the recent arrival respondents, the gift of money was explained as an adopted custom. RA #9, a 34-year old married male, explained how the gift of money is not common in Lebanon. Rather, the bride and groom register for gifts similar to North American customs and people bring gifts for the home. He elaborated, “If the guest is well-off, he will put money in a card, but where we are from (Northern Lebanon), no one has money to spare, so they bring anything they can to give as a wedding gift.” It was reported by all respondents that, traditionally, the gift of money was not given at a Lebanese wedding. Rather, guests would bring whatever they could to help the couple start their lives together. However, it was reported that currently in some places in Lebanon, people send invitations and in that invitation ask guests to make donations in a bank account set up by the couple. So, until recently, the gift of money was not a common trend in Lebanon.

Adoption/Integration of Canadian and Lebanese Customs

Overall, for all of the respondents in this study, it was important to maintain their ethnic heritage with respect to the wedding day. For example, many people in this study defined the *Dabke* (the traditional Lebanese dance) as truly Lebanese and embedded in the Lebanese heritage and culture. SG #5, a 26-year old single male, explained, “It is folkloric and a part of being Lebanese.” Likewise, SG #2, a 21-year old single female, commented on the traditional entrance of the bride and groom known as the “Zaffi” and how she would want it as part of her wedding. She explained, “I feel that it is important to maintain some heritage, but I don’t want my reception to be all Lebanese. I mean I want the Dabke and the music. Overall, I want to maintain a sense of Lebanese heritage and never forget where (I came) from.”

With respect to integrating Canadian culture, responses varied by group. For example, both first-generation and second-generation respondents believed it is extremely important to integrate Canadian customs into the Lebanese wedding. For example, FG #2, a 68-year old married male, explained, “It is very important. We came to this country for better opportunities and our children were born here. So it is important that our children integrate the Western norms they grew up with, but should not forget where they came from either.” Similarly, several second-generation respondents felt it is important to integrate their Lebanese roots with their Canadian upbringing in the wedding celebration. For example, SG #4, a 22 year old single female, explained, “It is important because, first of all, we are citizens of this country and we need to respect that. Second, it is important to express your heritage and show where you came from because it gives you a sense of belonging.” For other second-generation respondents, the main thing at the wedding was

a sense of understanding and compromise. For example, SG #5, a 26-year old single male, believed it is important to integrate both cultures because “some people don’t understand the culture or language. Therefore, it is important to take that into account and not force one culture over the other. I would have both to make everyone there comfortable and happy.”

For some recent arrival respondents, it was important to integrate both the customs of North America and that of one’s Lebanese heritage. These people see Canada as a place that gave them the opportunity to make a life better for themselves and their families. Also, they felt that there would be an understanding barrier if the entire wedding were in Lebanese, so they wanted to respect the non-Lebanese guests and integrate some North American customs. RA #3, a 20-year old single male, explained, “It is very important. When I get married, I will have guests who are non-Lebanese and would need to have both Lebanese and English music, food and other accommodations. It is unfair to impose one culture on the other leaving the other one out. But, they should never forget where our heritage came from either.” Some recent arrivals did not feel it was important for them to integrate Canadian customs, but believed it would become important for their children. One recent-arrival explained, “I think it will be important for my children. They will have lived in North America, gone to school and worked here and I would encourage them to respect the customs of both their host nation and in the same process remind them to maintain their Lebanese roots.”

Conversely, several recent arrivals did not feel that it was important to integrate the Western traditions into their wedding. They explained that they did not understand the language or the customs and they would be confused with what is happening. So, they

noted that they would keep the wedding traditional and would choose to not integrate any other customs or traditions. As one explained, “I don’t understand, so I would need it to be all in Lebanese.”

Most Important Symbols in the Lebanese Wedding

Finally, the participants were asked to rank the three most important symbols to the Lebanese wedding ceremony. All ten first-generation subjects ranked the church ceremony as the most important symbol. The rest of the symbols varied from the dressing of the bride to the traditional chants and dances, wedding reception and the yeast dough ritual. However, no one deemed the mate to be symbolic to the Lebanese wedding. Although many of the first-generation Lebanese participants explained that it would be ideal for their children to marry a person from the Lebanese Maronite community, they also said that they would never force their children to do anything they did not desire.

When asked to rank the most important symbols to a Lebanese wedding, most of the second-generation group chose the church ceremony, followed by many Lebanese customs like dressing the bride, the traditional chanting and a traditional Lebanese entrance with music and singing.

Finally, the recent arrivals were asked to rank the three most important symbols to a Lebanese wedding. All but two selected the mate to be Lebanese as the most important factor. Common answers included the traditional dancing and chanting, dressing of the bride, the yeast dough and most importantly that the woman has to be a virgin. Overall, the recent arrivals to Canada held more traditional views concerning the Lebanese wedding and did not deviate much from what has been widely held with respect to the Lebanese-Maronite wedding.

CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION

Main Symbols of the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite Wedding

Upon successful completion of the thirty interviews, twelve significant symbols were defined and discussed in greater depth in the results section of this study. As previously defined, significant symbols are those objects that people in a given society have a shared meaning of. It was clear throughout this study that first-generation and recent arrival respondents, those who have lived here for more than 10 years and those who have recently migrated to Canada, basically shared nearly the same views on many of the symbols discussed throughout this thesis in the Lebanese Maronite wedding. As will be explained later, however, some of the views of the first generation respondents, it seems, were based on expected or ideal behaviour while the same views were based on required behaviour according to recent arrival respondents. Conversely, second-generation Lebanese respondents did not share a strong similarity or enthusiasm as their first-generation counterparts did with respect to many of the rich traditions that are part of the Lebanese-Maronite wedding. However, although they did not express the same significance as the first generation respondents, the second-generation respondents did respect the symbols discussed throughout this thesis and were able to briefly and vaguely discuss many of the themes identified to be significant. This can be attributed to the notion of ritual and tradition that was posed as research question (2) and will be discussed below.

Ritual and Tradition

In addressing research questions (2) through (5) (refer to page pp 41) the concepts of ritual and tradition will be discussed in this section. Ritual and tradition are incredibly

important in the maintenance of many significant symbols found in the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding. Goffman defines ritual as “a perfunctory, conventionalized act through which an individual portrays his respect and regard for some object of ultimate value to that object of ultimate value or to its stand-in” (Goffman, 1971: 62). Furthermore, tradition is defined by customs or practices taught by one generation to another, often orally. For example, we can speak of the tradition of weddings and having similar rituals and traditions passed down from generation to generation. After completing the two-fold method of data-collection (analysis of past weddings and interviews), the main theme that was illustrated by all participants involved was that of tradition and ritual. Throughout this thesis, many respondents began their answers with, “Well, it is simply a custom and tradition of our culture” in explaining certain themes that emerge from the Lebanese-Maronite wedding. Thus, the concepts of tradition and ritual are key in defining the situation that is the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding as it is filled with many ritualistic moments from the dressing of the bride, yeast dough, traditional chants and “Zaffi”. The reasons why these symbols are so significant and important is because they have been passed down and practiced by many different generations. For many Lebanese citizens, they live in a different country far from Lebanon, hundreds of years in the present in 2006 and many couples are carrying out rituals that their great, great grandparents practiced several decades ago. Thus, the meaning and symbolisms that these themes possess are important to many Lebanese people across the worlds that live out their heritage through cultural practices like a traditional Lebanese-Maronite wedding.

First Generation, Second Generation and Recent Arrivals: Common Trends and Differences

For the most part, the findings were expected by the researcher. Overall, first-generation participants and recent arrival respondents shared similar responses to many of the themes discussed in the interviews. However, the recent arrival respondents were better sources of information for any change that has gone on from the traditions in the past. This is attributed to the fact that recent arrivals have spent their entire lives in Lebanon and are more firmly rooted in the Lebanese culture, having yet to experience the lifestyle of Western society to assimilate to its norms. Nonetheless, both the recent arrival and first-generation respondents understood all the major themes and shared similar viewpoints on many issues discussed. However, the two first-generation groups, those who have been living in Canada for several more years and those recent arrivals did differ with respect to certain cultural expectations. It seems the longer one interacts in a host society (for example, Canada), the more likely he/she is to adopt the customs and expectations of that host society. For example, the mate being of the same ethnic background (Lebanese) was defined as “ideal” for the first-generation respondents, while recent arrivals expressed a greater emphasis on marrying within the Lebanese community, with many indicating that it is “mandatory” that both the bride and groom be Lebanese for the wedding to be accepted. Furthermore, the perception and maintenance of virginity was also different for both groups. Again, the first-generation respondents believed it was “ideal” but not a punishable act as it once was if one was not a virgin, while for the recent arrivals, the young woman needed to be a virgin before marriage. Finally, the issue of integrating both Western customs and Lebanese traditions in the

wedding was different for the two groups of respondents. All of the first-generation respondents believed it was important to integrate both cultural customs, but for some recent arrivals the significance of incorporating both Canadian and Lebanese customs was not acknowledged.

While some significant themes in the study were different for the two first generation groups, the main discrepancies found were between the first-generation and second-generation respondents. The major discrepancies in defining certain situations arose between the recent arrivals and first-generation respondents from the second-generation group. For example, when discussing traditional rituals undertaken in the Lebanese community, many of the second-generation respondents were unable to provide an understanding of the symbolic meanings behind these rituals, as their first-generation and recent arrival counterparts did. For example, many of the second-generation respondents admitted to not understanding the significance of the traditional chanting situations and gave vague responses to what they perceived this chanting to represent. Furthermore, the yeast dough ritual was described by many second-generation respondents as an act they were familiar with but did not fully understand in terms of its symbolic significance. With respect to virginity, except for two second-generation respondents (SG #2 and 5), the maintenance of virginity was reported to be important for the “older generation” but less so for the younger generation. The dressing of the bride ritual was not understood by many second-generation respondents and some even rejected the notion of having the ritual take place at their own wedding. Finally, the church ceremony was interpreted differently from what the older generation perceived it to be. For example, for the older generation, there is no such thing as divorce, and

although the second-generation group did acknowledge that marriage was a sacrament that took place under the watchful eye of God, they did not define the situation in great detail as their older counterparts did. For example, the first generation and recent arrival respondents defined the church ceremony as a holy and royal event with the bride and groom taking on the roles of King and Queen and their guests acting as their royal witnesses. Furthermore, the theme of royalty and kingdoms were further emphasized by using crowns made up of flowers and vines, which are symbolic materials to the church and the Maronite-Catholic rite that symbolizes fertility and exuberance.

Overall, the results I obtained were expected for each group. For example, it was anticipated that those first-generation Lebanese-Canadians who have been in Canada for more than ten-years would have ideal expectations for their children, but would not be as strict enforcing their expectations as their recent-arrival counterparts would. Recent Arrivals on the other hand believed that the expectations of the country of origin should be stressed and they expressed these concerns in their responses throughout the interview process. Finally, second-generation respondents appreciated the symbols and topics discussed throughout the interviews, however, they did not place the same amount of significance or importance as their first-generation counterparts did. This, too, was expected.

Connecting Symbolic Interactionism to the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite Wedding

Symbolic Interactionism was employed as the main theoretical framework for the present investigation on Lebanese-Canadian Maronite weddings. More specifically, the importance of certain concepts that derive from symbolic interactionism, such as symbols, role-making, role-taking, role-taking as a generalized skill, in addition to the

three premises concerning the process of interaction and interpretation proposed by Blumer (1969) were investigated.

The most reoccurring theme that was evident throughout this thesis and a major concept in Symbolic Interactionism is the importance of symbols. Symbols were defined throughout the research as a class of social objects when they are defined to represent something else and according to their use and interpretation and were discussed in great depth by the majority of the respondents. Each respondent's description of what they perceived to be symbolic in the definition of the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding contained a great deal of information and implementation of symbolic references. Although certain groups differed in their definition of the symbols, the acknowledgment of something being symbolic in a wedding is symbolic in itself. Although certain second-generation respondents were unable to elaborate on the significance of certain symbols in the Lebanese-Canadian wedding, the fact they knew that certain rituals took place shows evidence of the shared meaning of the symbols. Conceivably, the symbols of Lebanese-Canadian Maronite weddings can be seen as those themes Lebanese-Maronites have a shared meaning about. Although they may not share identical and precise meanings for every symbol, they do acknowledge the fact that something is expected in the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding regarding certain symbols. This clearly indicates a decline in the sharedness of meaning amid all three groups uniformly. However, the mere fact that the second-generation group acknowledge the symbols discussed indicates some shared meaning. Whether people of the Lebanese-Maronite community decide to accept, reject or modify those symbols is directly associated with how they individually define the implementation of such symbols and

this will ultimately affect whether they accept, reject or modify the culturally prescribed meanings for those symbols. This leads to three more concepts in Symbolic Interactionism, role-taking, role-making and role-taking as a generalized skill.

Role-taking, Role-making and Role-taking as a Generalized Skill in the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite Wedding

Two concepts that help shape the conduct of actors engaging in interaction using social roles is that of role-making and role-taking. Firstly, role-making is the process wherein the person constructs activity in a situation so that it fits the definition of the situation, is consonant with the person's own role and meshes with activity of others (Hewitt, 2003:68-9). On the other hand, role-taking (which is Mead's original term) is the process wherein the person imaginatively occupies the role of another and looks at self and situation from that vantage point in order to engage in role-making (Hewitt, 2003:68-9). In other words, "Role-taking is seen in Mead's terms, as a process of putting oneself in another's place and adjusting behaviour accordingly in the course of interaction through the use of significant symbols (Stryker, 1980:107). Therefore, both processes, role-taking and role-making, employ the use of significant symbols. Growing up with Lebanese parents who try to instil a similar value system they were brought up with in a host society, like Canada- may lead children to having conflicting selves. Attending Canadian schools, working in Canadian institutions amid other people with different nationalities, socialization and an overall different way of seeing the world than you can lead the child to role-make and role-take, respectively. Growing up in a Lebanese home, one is introduced to a strict upbringing. For example, dating and marrying within the Lebanese community is highly encouraged and practicing one's culture is also a

commonality found in many Lebanese-Canadian homes. Some components of the Lebanese culture, the language of origin-Arabic, the foods and traditions we associate with are sometimes not accepted by the Anglo-Saxon community. Thus, the child either resorts to accepting the presented symbols and traditions of his or her parents' culture, or he/she rejects them deciding to deviate from his/her parent's culture. Unfortunately, individuals become trapped between two cultures, their own and that of the host society.

With respect to the research conducted, many first-generation respondents, in addition to second-generation respondents, summarized their interviews in a manner that indicated role-taking and role-making by both groups respectively. For example, many of the second-generation respondents alluded to the fact that their parents "brought them up a certain way and expected certain behaviour" and as a result, the second-generation respondents began viewing the situation from the perspective of the older generation and thus were engaging in the process of role-taking. Similarly, the first-generation respondents exemplified signs of role-taking by encouraging the implementation of both Western customs, in addition to one's Lebanese roots. The first-generation respondents respected the fact that their children were born and raised in this country and encouraged the integration of both customs. Furthermore, the significance of mate-selection was also seen from diverse perspectives. For example, each group understood where one another were coming from with respect to the mate-selection process, which is also indicative of seeing the situation from the other's perspective and essentially empathizing.

Another component in role-taking is role-taking as a generalized skill. For Symbolic Interactionists, in order for the individual to own their performance, the individual must grasp the situation and oneself from the point-of-view provided by the

roles of others (Hewitt, 2003:70). This ability to empathize with other role makers and see the world through a perspective other than one's own is what Symbolic Interactionists call a 'generalized skill' (Hewitt, 2003:70). For example, the issues of virginity, formulating the guest list and mate selection in the Lebanese community are important issues that have widely held beliefs by many Lebanese citizens living in Canada. For example, it is believed in the Lebanese Maronite community that one should maintain a sense of pureness and abstinence and remain a virgin until marriage (Barakat, 1993). This was illustrated by all three groups of respondents explaining how it was important to maintain a sense of virginity. However, some respondents placed more emphasis on the traditional Lebanese expectations than others. Furthermore, dating outside one's culture is frowned upon by some Lebanese Maronites who believe that one should marry a young woman or man from their own community or in-group to ensure a life like their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. For example, all first generation respondents believed it was mandatory to marry within one's own ethnic and religious group, while second-generation respondents only deemed the religious factor mandatory. Another common theme where the role-taking as a generalized skill comes into play is the guest-list for the wedding. It was determined through this research that there is a 'sense of obligation' that is owed to certain people in the community. For example, while North American wedding planners may leave out the distant cousin, the Lebanese community is first to invite them. Furthermore, the notion of returning the gesture of inviting those who have invited you to weddings in the past is widely practiced in the Lebanese-Canadian community.

Thus, before engaging in romantic relationships, going out to social gatherings and formulating a wedding guest-list Lebanese-Canadians take on, not only the role of their family, but also the role of the entire Lebanese Community. Thus, several thoughts may go through one's head, which may deter one from taking part in a particular situation. For example, a common statement used in the Lebanese Maronite community is, "what will so-and-so think? Is so-and-so's child doing that?" (*Shou la-ee ou'lou el-ness?*) Consequently, the individual weighs all of his/her options, and more often than not, decides not to partake in the activities in which their reference group is participating.

Contrary to the role-taking in terms of taking the role of the parent, there is the role-taking of the host-society and conforming to its norms. As a result, the individual begins to reject certain things about his or her parents' culture. Therefore, as opposed to honouring the beliefs and values set out by the parents, the individual rejects, conforms and begins to see the world from the lens of the host society. Consequently, the importance of virginity, music, language, the food, disciplinary methods, dating restrictions, mate selection and a myriad of other issues may lead the individual to role-take from a different source and fail to accept his or her ethnocultural heritage.

An essential notion within the Symbolic Interactionist paradigm is George Herbert Mead's definition of the self. For the Symbolic Interactionist, the self is an object of the actors own action(s) (Charon, 2001: 72-3). Hence, the development and emergence of the self occurs through the process of social interaction. In my opinion, the self is not passive or reactive to the actions of others. The individual has the opportunity to analyze and assess the situation through social interaction and has the choice whether to accept, reject or modify certain stimuli during the course of social interaction, in accordance with

Blumer's (1969) third premise of Symbolic Interactionism—The meanings of things are handled and modified through an interpretive process used by the person dealing with the things he or she encounters (Blumer, 1969: 2-3). Herbert Blumer believes that the socialization process is not simply a reaction to one another's action, but is a process wherein individuals interpret and define actions.

The first premise explains how individuals respond to social objects based on the meanings they have attributed to them. For some second-generation Lebanese Maronites the thought of communicating in a foreign language, adhering to the rules set out by the Lebanese value-system, the mate you select has to be Lebanese and not engaging in any sexual behaviour are accepted and practiced religiously. However, for others, the thought of living a life under the Lebanese structure may be construed as excessive and not conducive to mainstream values. Whether the individual believes in the Lebanese value-system or not it depends on the meaning they have accredited to it. The individual and the parent may share a similar meaning of the Lebanese system of living or they can sharply disagree.

The second premise states that meaning occurs as a social product, as opposed to being vested into us. Thus, meaning occurs for people through interaction with others within their immediate family, socialization or through interacting with other members of one's culture. Overall, it is a process of socialization where the social actor inquires about the various symbols, objects and their shared meanings and decides whether to accept, reject or modify them in some capacity. Through socialization, in addition to interacting with members of the host society the individual begins to gain different meanings about

various concepts, objects and symbols, like mate selection, virginity, different foods, the generalized other (what others will think) and marrying within one's culture.

Finally, the third premise holds that every person has his/her own autonomous interpretation of the situation and the meanings it produces. An example would be respondents SG #2, a 21-year old single female, and SG #3, a 22-year old single female. For someone like SG #2, she accepts all the symbols, rituals and traditions involved in constructing the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding. SG # 3 on the other hand, interprets the symbols and concepts of the Lebanese culture in a different light than her second-generation counterpart. For one second-generation respondent it was extremely important to integrate all facets of the Lebanese culture into her wedding from the pre-ceremony rituals to maintaining a sense of virginity before marriage. Conversely, the other second-generation respondent only deemed certain symbols and rituals as significant and selected carefully what she would include and exclude from her wedding, respectively. Another difference of opinion we saw was between the first-generation and recent arrivals group with respect to virginity, mate-selection and integrating both cultures. Although a similar definition of the symbols was shared by both groups, a sense of the recent-arrivals enforcing those beliefs and sticking by them was noted. For example, recent-arrivals would have it no other way but for a woman to be a virgin, marry another Lebanese and having strictly a Lebanese wedding. Conversely, the first-generation respondent consistently referred to what the recent arrivals deemed mandatory as something 'ideal'. This may indicate that recent arrivals become more understanding after living in a host society for more than 10 to 15 years and begin to revise and modify what they once believed to be mandatory aspects of the Lebanese wedding.

As a result, defining the situation relies on shared meaning and requires each social actor to concoct meaning in his or her mind about a particular situation. Each person acts on his or her own knowledge of the situation in terms of the roles and structure of the situation (Hewitt, 2003). Part of our everyday experience is the routine situation, which possesses congruent definitions that are taught to us and learned through our culture. Whether someone decides to accept, reject or modify these meanings is strictly up to the social actor.

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

Summary

Overall, the results indicated that both first generation groups have a strong shared meaning of the significant symbols discussed throughout this thesis. On the other hand, second-generation respondents seemed to have a general and vague understandings of the significant symbols discussed and were the one group who were more likely to define the wedding-ceremony and the symbols involved in a different light.

Limitations of Study

Some of the limitations to this study include the recruitment process, which has its limitations because it relied on respondents who essentially volunteered. Further, this may result in only capturing the views of those who are most interested and/or have the strongest attitudes and not those who have other, less prominent views. Finally, the largest limitation is the fact that I had a small sample size, which does not allow me to generalize about the entire population of Lebanese-Marionites living in Canada. Respondents came mostly from the Essex-County area, which could lead to findings unique to these respondents that explain their views. For example, Leamington is a fairly small town and Windsor is medium-size city. Attitudes toward adopting Canadian customs might be different for these Lebanese-Marionites than those who have settled in larger urban areas like Toronto, Vancouver and Ottawa.

Final Thoughts and Recommendations for Future Research

Within these final paragraphs, I will incorporate some final thoughts and recommendations for future research in the area of Arab studies. The current study can be seen as a significant contribution to the relatively little scientific literature on weddings, in addition to the substantial lack of work on ethnic weddings by migrants in host societies, for example North America, South America and Europe. Although there was little research prior to this work on ethnic weddings, the concepts, themes and major works of Symbolic Interactionism were highly useful in putting this work together. The main reasons why I chose this theory are that Symbolic Interactionism can be understood and applied in a myriad of ways. Firstly, Symbolic Interactionism focuses on the significance of symbols and their shared meanings among individuals in a given society. The roots of pragmatist philosophers such as Peirce, Dewey, Cooley and Mead of the renowned Chicago School of Sociology were integral to the main argument in this paper. The major tenets and characteristics of the Symbolic Interaction perspective are an emphasis on interactions among people, the use of symbols in communication and interaction, interpretation as part of action, self as constructed by others through communication and interaction and flexible, adjustable social processes (Hewitt, 2000: 7).

Thus, human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols, by interpretative process, or by ascertaining the meaning of one another's actions. Symbolic Interactionism is a theory which not only explains how society and one's culture influence the individual, but also, how social interactions engender and modify society, culture and the identity of the individual (Charon, 2001; Hewitt, 2003). Thus, when undertaking this

study on a particular culture using the Symbolic Interactionist framework, like the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite community, one has to outline and apply the major concepts of Symbolic Interactionism with respect to their study. So, throughout this work major concepts like social objects, symbols, significant symbols, roles, role-taking and role-making and finally role-making and the generalized other were all employed in explaining the major trends and patterns in this work.

This study will hopefully act as a pillar for future researchers in the Arab-studies field to write on issues pertaining to the maintenance of one's ethnic heritage in a host society. There have been many brilliant minds who have written on issues relating to the Arab world, however, no one has ventured off and written an entire thesis devoted to the traditions and rituals of a Lebanese-Maronite wedding. The traditions and rituals are deep and rich and I am pleased to say that I wrote on things that are important to me, my culture and ethnic heritage. Some suggestions for future research would include examining "mixed" weddings between two different cultures and how both parties maintain their respective cultural heritage. Furthermore, exploring variables such as gender, age and region differences may give a different perspective to the wedding and the symbols involved. Finally, a comparative analysis of ethnic weddings on a greater scale should be carried out to examine the many different cultures that exist in host societies such as the United States and Canada.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent to Participate and Letter of Intent for Wedding Tape Analysis



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: Understanding the Significant Symbols of Lebanese Canadian Maronite Weddings Ceremonies

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Paul Gebrael, from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Windsor. Results from this study will *be contributed to a thesis Masters degree in Sociology*.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact Paul Gebrael, MA student at (519) 965-7395 or by email gebrael@uwindsor.ca and Dr. Muhammad Shuraydi *Faculty advisor* at (519) 253-3000 (ext 2198) or shurayd@uwindsor.ca

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the proposed study is to explore the various definitions and meanings of significant symbols of the Lebanese-Canadian Maronites towards the roles, objects and significant symbols involved in constructing the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding ceremony and reception. More specifically, this study will outline, explain and assess such symbolic situations and significant symbols as the mate selection process, the importance of virginity, the wedding ceremony at the church and subsequently the reception. This research will first outline the contemporary views of second and third generation Lebanese-Canadian Maronites on the significant symbols shared and practiced in the host society as part of a Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:
You will first be asked to watch a video recording of a Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding ceremony reception. Secondly, you will be asked to comment and note on any significant symbols or situations that you feel are conveyed through your perception of the situation that is the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding.

Subjects will be asked to review a video recording of three Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding ceremonies that will not last longer than three hours each. The viewing of these tapes will be conducted in a confined classroom at Catholic Central High School.

Potential Risks and Discomforts

This study poses minimal risk and is designed to elicit positive responses and experiences from this session.

Potential Benefits to Subjects and/or to Society

Subjects who participate in this study will be a part of research that has either never been conducted or been researched at a minimal level. With this research, I hope to spark the interest of other students in ethnic studies to conduct research on other ethnic communities in a host society. By producing adequate and reliable results, I will be able to elaborate on this Masters thesis and potentially pursue a PhD and further my research in an area that lacks a sufficient amount of literature

Payment for Participation

Participants will not be paid for the involvement in this study.

Confidentiality

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. This will be upheld by having no form of identification on the response sheet, thus protecting the identity of each willing participant. Results will be produced in a manner that will not compromise anyone's identity or responses. Answers will only be used for the researcher's aid in defining the situation, the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding.

Participation and Withdrawal

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. The only circumstance whereby the researcher will terminate the subject's data without their consent will be if and when the participant decides to leave an answer sheet blank.

Feedback of the Results of this Study to the Subjects

Results will be made public upon the successful defence of the MA thesis, Understanding the Significant Symbols of Lebanese Canadian Maronite Weddings Ceremonies in the department of Sociology and Anthropology Graduate office, the Leddy Library and by contacting the primary researcher, Paul Gebrael.

Subsequent use of Data

This data will be used in subsequent studies.

Do you give consent for the subsequent use of the data from this study?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Rights of the Research Subjects

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3916; e-mail: lbunn@uwindsor.ca.

Signature of Research Subject/Legal Representative

I understand the information provided for the study Understanding the Significant Symbols of Lebanese Canadian Maronite Weddings Ceremonies as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

Signature of Investigator

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date



LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: Understanding the Significant Symbols of Lebanese Canadian Maronite Weddings Ceremonies

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Paul Gebrael, from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Windsor. Results from this study will *be contributed to a thesis Masters degree in Sociology*.

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Purpose of Study

The purpose of the proposed study is to explore the various definitions and meanings of significant symbols of the Lebanese-Canadian Maronites towards the roles, objects and significant symbols involved in constructing the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding ceremony and reception. More specifically, this study will outline, explain and assess such symbolic situations and significant symbols as the mate selection process, the importance of virginity, the wedding ceremony at the church and subsequently the reception. This research will first outline the contemporary views of second and third generation Lebanese-Canadian Maronites on the significant symbols shared and practiced in the host society as part of a Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding. Furthermore, the researcher will unveil the importance of having a "cultural wedding". Secondly, first generation Lebanese participants will also be assessed in terms of abovementioned symbols and situations to gain a contrasting perspective on the issues, objects, symbols and situations that will be analyzed throughout this thesis.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:
You will first be asked to watch a video recording of a Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding ceremony reception. Secondly, you will be asked to comment and note on any significant symbols or situations that you feel are conveyed through your perception of the situation that is the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding.

Subjects will be asked to review a video recording of three Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding ceremonies that will not last longer than three hours each. The viewing of these tapes will be conducted in a confined classroom at Catholic Central High School.

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Participation and Withdrawal

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. The researcher does not anticipate a circumstance whereby the termination of the subject's data without their consent will be necessary.

Feedback of the Results of this Study to the Subjects

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Subsequent use of Data

The researcher hopes to use this data in subsequent studies (i.e. publications and PhD dissertation).

Do you give consent for the subsequent use of the data from this study?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Rights of Research Subjects

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3916; e-mail: lbunn@uwindsor.ca.

Signature of Investigator

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix B: Wedding Tape Analysis Form

Wedding Tape Analysis

What is your Gender _____.

What is your Age _____

What country were you born in? _____

How many years have you been in Canada? _____ Years

Part I : The Dressing of the Groom and Bride. After watching the wedding tape, what are some significant symbols and traditions carried out during this time?

Part II: The Church Ceremony (During and After). After watching the wedding tape, what are some significant symbols and traditions carried out during this time?

Part III: The Reception. After watching the wedding tape, what are some significant symbols and traditions carried out during this time?

Other Comments:

Appendix C: Consent to Participate and Letter of Intent for Interviews



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

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Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you would be responsible for the following:

You will be asked a series of questions in a face-to-face interview regarding the symbols that were pointed out in a previous session. At any point you feel that you cannot answer the question, or would like to withdraw from the study, you reserve the right to do so. Interviews will last one hour in length.

Potential Risks and Discomforts

This study poses minimal risk and is designed to elicit positive responses and experiences from this session. Risk will not be a major issue as the content of the films are rather positive. However, in terms of the questioning, certain sensitive issues such as virginity, purity, mate selection and other moral issues will emerge, which may be sensitive issues for some.

Potential Benefits to Subjects and/or to Society

Subjects who participate in this study will be a part of research that has either never been conducted or been researched at a minimal level. With this research, I hope to spark the interest of other students in ethnic studies to conduct research on other ethnic communities in a host society. By producing adequate and reliable results, I will be able to elaborate on this Masters thesis and potentially pursue a PhD and further my research in an area that lacks a sufficient amount of literature

Payment for Participation

Participants will not be paid for the involvement in this study.

Confidentiality

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. This will be upheld by having no form of identification on the response sheet, thus protecting the identity of each willing participant. Results will be produced in a manner that will not compromise anyone's identity or responses. Answers will only be used for the researcher's aid in defining the situation, the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding.

Participation and Withdrawal

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

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Results will be made public upon the successful defence of the MA thesis, Understanding the Significant Symbols of Lebanese Canadian Maronite Weddings Ceremonies in the department of Sociology and Anthropology Graduate office, the Leddy Library the Research Ethics Board website, www.uwindsor.ca/reb and/or by contacting the primary researcher, Paul Gebrael.

Subsequent use of Data

This data will be used in subsequent studies.

Do you give consent for the subsequent use of the data from this study?

☐ Yes

☐ No

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You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3916; e-mail: lbunn@uwindsor.ca.

Signature of Research Subject/Legal Representative

I understand the information provided for the study Understanding the Significant Symbols of Lebanese Canadian Maronite Weddings Ceremonies as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

Signature of Investigator

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date



LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

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You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. The researcher does not anticipate a circumstance whereby the termination of the subject's data without their consent will be necessary.

Feedback of the Results of this Study to the Subjects

Results will be made public upon the successful defence of the MA thesis, Understanding the Significant Symbols of Lebanese Canadian Maronite Weddings Ceremonies in the department of Sociology and Anthropology Graduate office, the Leddy Library the research ethics board website <http://www.uwindsor.ca/reb> and by contacting the primary researcher, Paul Gebrael.

Subsequent use of Data

The researcher hopes to use this data in subsequent studies (i.e. publications and PhD dissertation).

Do you give consent for the subsequent use of the data from this study?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Rights of Research Subjects

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3916; e-mail: lbunn@uwindsor.ca.

Signature of Investigator

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix D: Interview Guide Questions

1. What is your gender and how old are you?
2. What is your marital status? Are you married or single?
3. What country were you born in and how long have you resided in Canada?
4. How important is it to marry within your ethnic and religious group and why?
5. How big of a role should one's parents play in the mate selection process/why?
6. How big of a role should one's parents play in the formulating of a guest list/why?
7. How important is the color white to the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite community and in your perception what does it represent?
8. In your opinion, what is the significance of maintaining a sense of purity or virginity to the Lebanese-Canadian family?
9. In your opinion, what is the importance of the groom's family being present in the dressing of the bride?
10. In your opinion, during the dressing of the bride, what is the importance of the *Zalghouta* (Traditional Chanting)? In addition, what symbolic meaning do you think it represents?
11. How important is the church ceremony to the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite community and in your perception what does it represent?
12. How significant are the bridesmaid and groomsmen roles in the Lebanese-Canadian Maronite wedding/why?
13. In your opinion, during the church ceremony, what is the importance of the lighting of candles by both the mother of the groom and the mother of the bride?
14. In your opinion, after the church ceremony, what is the importance of the *Zalghouta* outside the church (Traditional Chanting)? In addition, what symbolic meaning do you think it represents?
15. In your opinion, after the church ceremony, what is the importance of the placing a piece of yeast dough over the lintel of the new home?
16. In your opinion, what is the importance of the wedding reception?

17. In your opinion, what is the importance of the *Zaffi* (A time where the bride and groom dance for their guests)? In addition, what symbolic meaning do you think it represents?
18. In your opinion, what is the importance of the *Dabke* (Circular dance with the joining of the hands)? In addition, what symbolic meaning do you think it represents?
19. In your opinion, during the reception, what is the importance of the *Zalghouta* during the *Zaffi* (Traditional Chanting)? In addition, what symbolic meaning do you think it represents?
20. In your opinion what is the significance of the receiving line? Also, is there any special dialogue exchanged?
21. In your opinion, how important is the gift of money?
22. How important is it to integrate both western traditions, in addition to the Lebanese traditions and rituals that derive from the old country?
23. In Conclusion, what do you perceive to be the top three (in order) symbols to a Lebanese Canadian Maronite wedding ceremony?

Appendix E: Recruitment Poster



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY & ANTHROPOLOGY

Understanding the Significant Symbols of Lebanese-Canadian Maronite Wedding Ceremonies

by

Paul Gebrael

Volunteers are needed to participate in an M.A. research project dealing with the Significant Symbols of Lebanese-Canadian Maronite Wedding Ceremonies. If you are between the ages of 18-70 and are first or second generation Lebanese, or are new to Canada and you would like to participate in this research project, please contact Paul Gebrael at: Gebrael@uwindsor.ca or 965-7395.

Table 1: Common Themes from Phase I: Wedding Tape Analysis

<u>Part I:</u> <u>Dressing the Bride</u>	<u>Part II:</u> <u>Church Ceremony</u>	<u>Part III:</u> <u>The Wedding Reception</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The color White • White Dress • Family gathered at the home of the bride and groom, respectively • Grooms family (women) walking to the brides house • Elder women engaging in Traditional Chants • Dressing the Bride 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Color White • Lebanese Church • Crowning the bride, groom, maid/matron of honour and best man • Signing of marriage certificates • Outside the church rice and confetti being thrown • Traditional Chanting outside the church • Yeast Dough Ritual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving Line • Introduction of both sets of parents and the entire bridal party to Lebanese music, Lebanese instruments and a Lebanese band • Elder women singing and greeting the bride and groom • Special chants are sung welcoming the guests and wishing the best for their single children. • Large Guest List • Dancing to Lebanese music (Belly dancing and Dabke) • Integrating both Lebanese and Canadian Customs in the wedding

Table 2: Common Themes from Interviews

<u>Symbols</u>
♦ Mate selection
♦ Role of parents in mate selection/guest list
♦ Colour white and Virginity
♦ Dressing of the bride / traditional chants
♦ Church ceremony
♦ Wedding party
♦ Traditional chanting after ceremony
♦ Yeast dough ritual
♦ Wedding reception
♦ Receiving line
♦ Gift of money
♦ Adoption/integration of Canadian customs
♦ Most important symbols

Table 3 Characteristics of Judges: Wedding Tape Analysis

<u>Judge</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Country Born in</u>	<u>Years in Canada</u>
1	Female	19	Canada	19
2	Female	20	Canada	20
3	Female	21	Canada	21
4	Female	44	Canada	23
5	Male	45	Lebanon	39
6	Female	48	Lebanon	13
7	Female	59	Lebanon	37
8	Female	56	Lebanon	12
9	Male	25	Canada	25
10	Female	65	Lebanon	20
11	Female	23	Canada	23

Table 4 Characteristics of 30 interviewees

Participant	Age	Marital Status	Country of Origin	Year Individual/ Family Immigrated to Canada
FG #1 Female	53-years old	Married	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 1981.
FG #2 Male	68-years old	Married	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 1952
FG #3 Female	47-years old	Married	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 1974
FG # 4 Female	70-years old	Not-Married	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 1985
FG #5 Male	47-years old	Not-Married	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 1988
FG #6 Male	70-years old	Married	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 1940
FG #7 Male	46-years old	Married	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 1990
FG #8 Female	59-years old	Married	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 1989
FG #9 Female	57-years old	Widow	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 1978
FG #10 Female	46-years old	Married	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 1992
SG #1 Male	56-years old	Married	Born in Canada	Family migrated to Canada in 1949
SG #2 Female	21-years old	Not-Married	Born in Canada	Family migrated to Canada in 1977
SG #3 Female	22-years old	Not-Married	Born in Canada	Family migrated to Canada in 1976
SG #4 Female	22-years old	Not-Married	Born in Canada	Family migrated to Canada in 1979
SG #5 Male	26-years old	Not-Married	Born in Canada	Family migrated to Canada in 1969
SG #6 Female	32-years old	Married	Born in Canada	Family migrated to Canada in 1969
SG #7 Female	36-years old	Married	Born in Canada	Family migrated to Canada in 1967
SG #8 Male	26-years old	Not-Married	Born in Canada	Family migrated to Canada in 1977
SG #9 Female	25-years old	Married	Born in Canada	Family migrated to Canada in 1972
SG #10 Male	21-years old	Not-Married	Born in Canada	Family migrated to Canada in 1977

RA #1 Male	21-years old	Married	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 2006
RA #2 Male	22-years old	Married	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 2006
RA #3 Male	20-years old	Not-Married	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 2001
RA #4 Male	20-years old	Not-Married	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 2001
RA #5 Male	44-years old	Married	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 2001
RA #6 Woman	38-years old	Married	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 2001
RA #7 Female	42-years old	Married	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 2002
RA #8 Woman	31-years old	Married	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 2001
RA #9 Male	34-years old	Married	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 2001
RA #10 Male	40-years old	Married	Born in Lebanon	Migrated to Canada in 2006

FG denotes First-Generation, SG-Second-Generation and RA as Recent Arrivals

Vita Auctoris

Paul Gebrael was born on August 5th, 1981 in Leamington, Ontario, Canada. He attended Windsor's Catholic Central High School (1995-2000) and graduated Valedictorian in 2000. In September of 2000, Paul enrolled in the B.A Honours programme in Criminology at the University of Windsor. In 2004, Paul graduated with a B.A Honours and was successfully accepted into the Masters of Arts programme specializing in Sociology. He is currently a candidate for the Masters degree and plans to graduate in October 2006.